EXPLORING VIRTUAL SUPERVISION IN STUDENT TEACHING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

A Scholarly Research Project

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This action research, qualitative case study examined how nontraditional student teachers experience virtual supervision. The bounded case included three adult candidates in an Illinois alternative certification program. Data were collected through four semi-structured Zoom interviews per participant across the semester, supplemented by lesson recordings, artifacts, and member checking. Cross-case analysis yielded six themes: flexibility, feedback, technology use and digital adaptation, reflective practice, supportive relationships, and equity and access. Flexibility and access enabled high-quality feedback and sustained reflection, while predictable supervisory touchpoints and simple technology routines helped translate insights into classroom change. Program implications include designing flexibility by default (e.g., observation windows, remote recording, paced deliverables), centering technology onboarding, and coordinating with cooperating teachers to minimize disruption. Although transferability is limited by the small, single-program sample, findings suggest that well-designed virtual supervision can be rigorous, relational, and equitable for adult learners.

Keywords: virtual supervision; virtual supervision; nontraditional student teachers; video-based observation; asynchronous feedback; reflective practice; alternative certification

DEDICATION

To Joe Thompson, I prayed for a husband like you. I'm blessed to have you in my life. Thank you for the encouragement that carried me through long days and weekends. You showed grace when I chose research and writing over family gatherings. Your patience, confidence, and humor kept me going when the finish line felt far away. Your positive outlook and constant reminders of the bigger picture kept me moving forward. We've faced many hurdles over the past couple of years, but your steadfast love has always been a constant. Thank you for being my partner in every way.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Alternative certification programs with virtual student teaching supervision are emerging as innovative solutions to combat Illinois' early childhood teacher shortage, particularly for nontraditional students. These programs are designed to accommodate individuals transitioning from other careers or having other commitments that make traditional teacher training routes unfeasible. Research highlights that these virtual programs enable nontraditional students to fulfill their teaching requirements remotely, thereby broadening the pool of potential teachers (Slay et al., 2020). This approach addresses the immediate need for more early childhood educators and ensures that these new teachers are well-prepared and supported throughout their training.

Nontraditional students, defined by characteristics such as age, employment status, and life circumstances, bring diverse perspectives and needs to their educational experiences (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). Virtual supervision, while offering flexibility and accessibility, also presents distinct challenges, such as technological barriers, reduced face-to-face interaction, and potential impacts on the quality of feedback and support. Existing literature has explored various aspects of virtual learning and supervision; however, a gap remains in understanding how these fundamentals affect nontraditional student teachers (Redmond et al., 2018).

This action research study uses a qualitative methodology with a case study design to investigate the experiences of nontraditional student teachers under virtual supervision. The experiences of these students' journeys will be captured through in-depth interviews, observations, and the analysis of applicable documents. This chapter introduces the research problem of virtual supervision in student teaching, provides background information on the necessity of the study, and discusses the history, context, and challenges related to the study. It

outlines the purpose of the research, poses the research questions, and defines key terms guiding the study. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the study's significance and a brief overview of the organization of the action research report's five chapters.

Background Information

Historical Overview of Traditional Student Teacher Supervision

Student teaching has been a fundamental element of teacher education for over a century (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). Initially, student teaching followed an apprenticeship model where pre-service teachers learned through direct, immersive experiences in classroom settings under the guidance of experienced educators. This hands-on approach was designed to provide student teachers with practical experience in managing classrooms, planning lessons, and implementing instructional strategies (Clarke et al., 2014). The primary goal was to ensure novice teachers could transition smoothly from theoretical learning to practical application in real-world teaching environments.

Traditional supervision has played a fundamental role in the success of student teaching programs. This model involves experienced mentor teachers and university supervisors providing direct oversight and feedback to student teachers. Through regular classroom observations and subsequent reflective conferences, supervisors offer critical insights into teaching practices, classroom management, and professional development (Clarke et al., 2014). The face-to-face nature of traditional supervision enables immediate feedback and personalized guidance, thereby fostering supportive relationships between supervisors and student teachers. This close engagement is crucial for developing student teachers' confidence and skills as they prepare to enter the teaching profession.

Despite its strengths, traditional supervision has faced several challenges and criticisms, prompting a re-evaluation and adaptation of the model. One significant issue has been the variability in the quality of mentoring experiences. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of traditional supervision can be inconsistent and heavily dependent on the cooperating teachers' skills, attitudes, and availability (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). Additionally, logistical difficulties such as scheduling conflicts and the time-intensive nature of in-person observations have raised concerns about the sustainability of this model. These challenges have led educators to explore alternative approaches to student teaching supervision.

The Rise of Nontraditional Students

Teacher education practices have shifted over the past decade, with an increase in nontraditional student teachers (Chen, 2017). Nontraditional students, defined as those who do not follow the typical path of attending college immediately after high school, can include students older than the traditional college ages of 18-22, those returning after working, students with dependents, full-time workers, and those who have delayed college for personal, financial, or professional reasons (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). This demographic shift has been driven by various factors, including economic changes, the need for career transitions, and the growing accessibility of higher education through online and flexible learning programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Nontraditional student teachers bring diverse experiences and viewpoints to the classroom, which can enhance the learning environment. Studies indicate that these individuals often demonstrate high levels of motivation and adaptability in their coursework, which can positively influence their teaching practices (Chen, 2017). Additionally, their previous professional and life experiences can provide valuable context and insights into their teaching,

contributing to their growth as educators and ultimately benefiting students' learning experiences.

However, nontraditional student teachers also face unique challenges that can impact their educational journey. Balancing multiple roles and responsibilities often increases stress and time management issues, which can hinder academic performance and overall well-being (Merrill, 2014). Additionally, nontraditional students may encounter technological barriers and a need for familiarity with modern educational technologies, which are becoming increasingly fundamental to current teaching practices. Institutions must provide support and resources to address the specific needs of nontraditional student teachers (Hussar et al., 2020).

Many teacher education programs have adapted curriculum and support services in response to the growing presence of nontraditional student teachers. These adaptations include offering flexible scheduling options, online courses, and all-inclusive support services tailored to meet the needs of nontraditional students. Additionally, mentorship and peer support programs have been implemented to give students the guidance and encouragement they need to navigate their college experience (Scott, 2020). By recognizing and addressing the unique challenges and strengths of nontraditional student teachers, universities can foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment that contributes to the development of a diverse teaching workforce (Andzik et al., 2023).

Impact of Virtual Supervision on Student Teachers

The impact of virtual supervision on student teachers has garnered attention in research, particularly in terms of its efficacy and adaptability. Research suggests that virtual supervision can provide comparable learning opportunities and foster the development of student teachers. Liu et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of monitoring to ensure that virtual supervision can

provide fair educational opportunities and help student teachers grow professionally, especially in rural regions where traditional methods may face limitations. Another study by Dede et al. (2009) highlighted that video conferencing for supervising student teachers yields results that facilitate communication and prompt feedback, similar to in-person supervision. Furthermore, studies have shown that technology-driven monitoring and feedback (e.g., video-based observation and virtual coaching) increase preservice teachers' knowledge and confidence**,** thereby strengthening their professional growth (Gremaud, 2021; Ledger et al., 2019).

Illinois Teacher Shortage

The teacher shortage in Illinois remains a pressing challenge, though some indicators show a slight easing. As of October 1, 2024, the Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE] reported 3,864 unfilled teaching positions statewide, with additional gaps among paraprofessionals and support staff (Illinois State Board of Education, 2025). A companion statewide shortage study for SY2024–25 similarly finds persistent hiring difficulties—especially in high-need roles and rural or under-resourced areas—even as overall vacancies decline (Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools [IARSS] & Illinois Workforce & Education Research Collaborative [IWERC], 2025). Contributing factors continue to include limited applicant pools, concerns about compensation and working conditions, and uneven professional support (IWERC & IARSS, 2025). These dynamics build on pandemic-era pressures that elevated attrition risks for some districts (Kraft et al., 2021).

To address shortages, Illinois has expanded targeted recruitment and retention investments. The state-funded Teacher Vacancy Grants in FY2024 and FY2025 to help the most understaffed districts recruit, hire, support, and retain educators—an initiative linked with thousands of hires and improved retention in early results (ISBE, 2024a; ISBE, 2024b). Illinois is

also backing teacher residency and registered apprenticeship pathways, including a pilot with the National Center for Teacher Residencies and DCEO to build “earn-while-you-learn” preparation models (ISBE, 2025; Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, 2024; National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2025). Financial support continues through ISAC programs, such as the Minority Teachers of Illinois (MTI) Scholarship**,** the Special Education Teacher Tuition Waiver (SETTW)**,** the Illinois Teachers Loan Repayment Program**,** and federal TEACH Grants, administered via ISAC’s portal (Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2024, 2025a, 2025b). Together, these strategies complement broader calls to improve compensation, working conditions, and ongoing professional learning to attract and retain high-quality educators (IWERC & IARSS, 2025).

ECACE Consortium for Equity Scholarship Program

The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship Program in Illinois is a significant initiative designed to support the professional development of early childhood educators, particularly those from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. This program aims to expand access to additional pathways for higher education and professional credentials for individuals employed in early childhood education settings. By providing scholarships, the ECACE Consortium helps remove financial barriers that often impede educators from pursuing further education. This financial assistance is crucial in enabling these professionals to enhance their skills and qualifications, advance their careers, and improve their contributions to the field (Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2021).

Furthermore, the ECACE Scholarship Program emphasizes equity by prioritizing applicants who are already working in the early childhood sector and are committed to furthering their professional development. This initiative supports the career growth of individual educators

and addresses broader systemic issues by elevating the overall quality of early childhood education in Illinois. By focusing on those actively contributing to the field, the program ensures that further education and professional development benefits are directly felt within the communities that need them the most. This strategy aims to improve educational outcomes for young children nationwide, promoting a more equitable and effective early childhood education system (Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2021).

Researcher's Experience

Throughout my journey in teacher education, I followed a traditional path, attending school full-time with the unwavering emotional and financial support of my parents. This support enabled me to focus on my classes without the added responsibilities. I attended in-person classes that provided an interactive learning environment throughout my teacher-educator program. These classes included immediate feedback and encouraged active participation, fostering a sense of community among peers and instructors. Additionally, the financial stability that my parents' support provided alleviated many of the everyday stresses associated with pursuing a bachelor's degree, enabling me to focus entirely on my academics.

I worked closely with an in-person supervisor who provided consistent and personalized guidance during my student teaching. These face-to-face meetings enabled real-time feedback and constructive discussions about my teaching practices, classroom management techniques, and professional development. The hands-on support I received was crucial in enhancing my pedagogical skills and bolstering my confidence as an educator. The opportunity to observe and apply theoretical knowledge in actual classroom settings, under the guidance of an experienced supervisor, laid a solid foundation for my teaching career, equipping me with the necessary tools to succeed in diverse educational environments.

Having transitioned into the role of a university professor and virtual student teaching supervisor, I now find myself researching the experiences of nontraditional student teachers navigating the complexities of virtual supervision. My firsthand experience with traditional in-person supervision has provided me with a unique perspective on the challenges and benefits of various supervisory models. As a virtual supervisor, I strive to utilize technology to provide meaningful support and guidance to student teachers. This dual perspective, having experienced both traditional and virtual supervision firsthand, informs my research as I seek to identify best practices and develop strategies to enhance the effectiveness of virtual supervision for nontraditional student teachers.

Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of nontraditional student teachers who were supervised virtually during their student teaching placements. The study was guided by the central question: What are the experiences of nontraditional student teachers supervised virtually during their student teaching placements?

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context of this study:

Cooperating teachers are experienced classroom educators who serve as mentors and assessors for student teachers during their teaching experience; they provide feedback, model effective teaching practices, support reflective practices, and help student teachers navigate the teaching profession (Clarke et al., 2014)

Nontraditional students are defined as those who do not follow the standard path of attending college immediately after high school. This category can include students older than the traditional college age range of 18-22, those returning after working, students with

dependents, full-time workers, and those who delayed college for personal, financial, or professional reasons (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014).

Alternative certification programs are nontraditional pathways for individuals to become certified teachers, featuring accelerated training and on-the-job learning components that enable students to start teaching while completing their certification requirements (Sutcher et al., 2019).

Student teachers work under the guidance of an experienced teacher within a classroom setting to gain practical experience and develop teaching skills before becoming licensed educators. They engage in instructional activities, learn classroom management techniques, and apply theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting to prepare them for a future career in education (ISBE, n.d.).

Teaching practices encompass a range of methods and strategies used to educate young children effectively. These practices promote engagement, understanding, and skills development across various subjects. Some key elements include differentiated instruction, hands-on learning, formative assessment, and the use of technology (Good et al., 2009).

University supervisors are academic staff members responsible for overseeing the student teachers during their field placements. They collaborate with cooperating teachers and student teachers to facilitate a comprehensive learning experience involving regular classroom observations and student-teacher performance assessments (Maes et al., 2022).

Virtual supervision uses online platforms, video conferencing, and other internet-based tools to observe, guide, and evaluate students in real-time or asynchronously (Redmond et al., 2018).

Significance of the Study

Research on virtual supervision for student teachers is limited, especially for nontraditional students. A preliminary search shows fewer than 50 peer-reviewed articles in the U.S. that focus on virtual supervision, and even fewer specifically examine the context of Illinois. This highlights a clear gap in the literature, particularly around the experiences and challenges faced by nontraditional students. This study aims to address that gap and provide much-needed insights into how virtual supervision can better support these learners.

Nontraditional student teachers, who often balance work, family, and school, face unique challenges that traditional supervision models don't always address well. Virtual supervision offers a flexible alternative that can meet these needs. Asynchronous learning enables nontraditional students to schedule lessons and access content in a manner that suits their busy lives (Remenick, 2019). This shift toward virtual supervision also reflects broader trends in education, where inclusivity is becoming a greater focus. Virtual supervision helps ensure that all teacher candidates, regardless of their circumstances, receive the support they need to succeed (Benigno, 2016). This research will dive into the best systems and strategies for nontraditional teacher education majors.

Higher Education Institutions will benefit from this research because it offers practical solutions for creating more inclusive and flexible supervision models. As the number of nontraditional students grows, institutions will need better ways to meet their unique needs. By examining the experiences of these students in virtual supervision, the study will offer clear recommendations on how to enhance teacher preparation programs. With virtual supervision becoming more common, these insights will be crucial in shaping future practices and improving the overall quality of teacher education.

Organization of the Research Report

This chapter introduced the background and significance of the study, providing a rationale for investigating the experiences and challenges faced by nontraditional student teachers under virtual supervision. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 will present a comprehensive literature review, exploring existing research and theoretical perspectives relevant to virtual supervision and nontraditional students. Chapter 3 will detail the study's research methodology and methods, outlining the design, data collection, and analysis procedures used to examine the central research question. Chapter 4 will report and discuss the study's findings/results, providing an analysis of the gathered data and its implications for understanding the impact of virtual supervision. Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude the study's final report by discussing implications for practice, offering recommendations for future research, and suggesting ways to enhance virtual supervision in teacher education programs.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The increasing use of virtual supervision in student teaching for nontraditional students presents unique opportunities and challenges. Virtual supervision offers enhanced flexibility, accessibility, and innovative teaching practices that greatly benefit nontraditional students. According to Liu et al. (2018), incorporating virtual supervision in teacher education has shown promise in overcoming geographical barriers and providing equitable access to quality mentorship for all student teachers. This approach supports the diverse needs of nontraditional students and enhances teacher preparation programs. Using technology, virtual supervision ensures student teachers remain supported throughout their placements. This innovation in teacher supervision underscores the potential for digital tools to enhance the quality and accessibility of teacher education. However, they may also face specific difficulties related to technological accessibility, equity, and the quality of mentorship in a digital environment.

This chapter focuses on understanding the impact of virtual supervision on nontraditional students, particularly their experiences, benefits, and challenges in a digital teaching environment. The chapter examines the historical context of student-teacher supervision, the emergence of virtual supervision, and the opportunities it presents. It highlights the positive aspects, including the development of digital competencies and the ability to tailor learning experiences to individual needs. Additionally, addresses the technological, psychological, and equity challenges associated with virtual supervision, primarily for nontraditional students. The chapter concludes by examining the role of teacher education innovations and alternative certification programs in addressing teacher shortages.

Historical Context of Student Teacher Supervision

The supervision of student teachers has undergone significant evolution, influenced by changes in educational theories, societal needs, and technological advancements. Initially based on apprenticeship models, supervision emphasized observation and practical experience, with minimal focus on structured feedback or reflective practice. Over time, the shortcomings of this approach, such as inconsistent mentorship and a lack of real-time support, prompted the development of more standardized and growth-oriented models. Key milestones, including the emergence of clinical supervision, Professional Development Schools (PDS), and the integration of digital tools, have progressively refined the supervision process to prioritize collaboration, inclusivity, and adaptability. These changes mirror broader trends in education, emphasizing reflective practice, equity, and the need to prepare teachers for the complexities of modern classrooms. This section examines the historical evolution of student-teacher supervision, highlighting the transition from control-oriented methods to more supportive and personalized frameworks that align with contemporary educational priorities.

Early Apprenticeship Models

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, student teachers were supervised through an apprenticeship model, with seasoned educators guiding them for many years. These early approaches mainly emphasized observation and developing hands-on skills rather than offering structured feedback or encouraging reflective practices. Student teachers learned by doing but seldom received formative feedback to help them improve during their placements. Feedback typically came at the end of the semester, making it difficult for pre-service teachers to make real-time adjustments in their teaching methods (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020; Stahl et al., 2018).

This lack of ongoing support created notable gaps in the supervision process, resulting in a reduced overall effectiveness of teacher preparation.

Over time, educators saw the flaws in the apprenticeship model due to inconsistent supervision across schools. While some student teachers received excellent guidance, others were left to figure out teaching independently on their own. By the mid-20th century**,** this led to the development of more standardized supervision models, focusing on structured observation and feedback (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). This shift was crucial in developing more effective supervision models that emphasized professional growth. Despite these improvements, issues persisted, particularly in terms of equity and quality. The expertise and availability of mentors varied significantly, resulting in uneven support and preparation for student teachers (Livers, Baker, Guerra, & Acosta, 2022). Glanz (1994) noted that early supervision was often characterized by control and bureaucracy, particularly in large urban school districts, where superintendents played a pivotal role. The primary goal from the 1900s to the 1960s was to ensure compliance with district standards and maintain order, rather than to support the professional growth of student teachers. Supervision was more about enforcing educational policies than developing teaching methods. This compliance often hinders personal development in the teaching profession (Glanz, 1994). However, as educational theories evolved, so did the approach to supervision, leading to more reflective and growth-oriented practices.

Evolution of Supervision Models

In the early 20th century, supervision in teacher education was essentially evaluative and primarily focused on ensuring compliance with instructional standards. Supervisors observed student teachers to assess their adherence to specific teaching practices, with an emphasis on correcting mistakes rather than encouraging personal growth or professional autonomy (Livers et

al., 2022). The role of the supervisor was authoritative, leaving limited room for creativity, innovation, or self-reflection in teaching practices. This top-down approach mirrored broader societal and educational trends of the time, prioritizing control, standardization, and efficiency over fostering individual teacher development. Supervisors, often superintendents or senior educators, maintained strict expectations, emphasizing adherence to established protocols and procedures. According to Glanz (1994), this early model of supervision reflected a time when educational institutions were structured similarly to government systems, with an emphasis on maintaining order and maximizing productivity rather than cultivating teaching skills.

By the early to mid-20th century, it became clear that teaching was more than just following procedures; it involved a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Supervisors and educators began recognizing that teaching requires ongoing reflection and professional growth. This led to the development of mentoring relationships, where supervisors acted more as guides than evaluators (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). Creating laboratory schools, like John Dewey's laboratory school at the University of Chicago, played a crucial role in advancing these new supervision models. In these environments, student teachers could apply theoretical knowledge practically while receiving feedback and support. Integrating theory and practice helped create a more consistent approach to supervision.

However, challenges remained, especially in aligning university-based teacher education with actual classroom experiences. The gap between theory and practice persisted, with many student teachers struggling to connect academic learning with the real-world challenges of the classroom. A more cohesive approach was developed with the introduction of clinical supervision in the mid-20th century. Clinical supervision emphasizes feedback, reflection, and ongoing professional growth, making supervision a more collaborative and supportive process

(McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). This model marked a significant shift from earlier methods that focused solely on evaluation, promoting a more inclusive approach to teacher education.

Despite the improvements brought by clinical supervision, the landscape of teacher education continued to evolve. By the late 20th century, the rise of Professional Development Schools (PDS) introduced new dynamics into supervision practices. PDS partnerships between universities and K-12 schools (kindergarten through high school) provided student teachers with enriched learning experiences, allowing them to immerse themselves in authentic teaching environments under the guidance of experienced educators. This collaboration facilitated a deeper integration of theory and practice, reinforcing the importance of reflective practice and continuous improvement.

The technological revolution of the 21st century has further transformed supervision models. The advent of digital tools and virtual platforms revolutionized how supervision is conducted, making it more flexible and accessible. Virtual supervision enables real-time feedback and supports student teachers in remote or underserved areas, ensuring equitable access to quality supervision. These advancements have enhanced supervisors' ability to provide personalized guidance, fostering a supportive and responsive learning environment.

How Supervision has Evolved to Meet Student Needs

The move from an apprenticeship model to a more structured and collaborative approach mirrors broader changes in teacher education. Over time, educators have come to view teaching as a reflective practice that thrives on continuous feedback and professional dialogue. Supervision models have evolved to encourage student teachers to critically evaluate their practices (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). This evolution has led to more structured feedback processes, such as those found in Goldhammer's clinical supervision model, which focuses on

the holistic development of teachers rather than just meeting instructional standards (Goldhammer, 1969).

The rise of Professional Development Schools (PDS) in the late 20th century also significantly impacted the evolution of supervision. These schools fostered close partnerships between universities and K-12 schools, which allow student teachers to work alongside experienced educators in real classroom settings. These partnerships helped student teachers integrate theory with practice and offered ongoing professional development for practicing teachers (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). This collaborative approach has strengthened the relationship between teacher education programs and schools, making the supervision process more integrated and supportive.

As supervision models have evolved from apprenticeship to clinical supervision to mentorship and collaboration, they have become essential in preparing teachers for the complexities of modern classrooms. Today's teachers must navigate diverse student needs, technological advancements, and shifting educational policies, making it crucial to have robust supervision models in place. The evolution of these models over time reflects a growing understanding of the multifaceted nature of teaching and the need for continuous professional growth. Supervision is now about fostering innovation, reflection, and lifelong learning in teachers, not just ensuring compliance.

Today, supervising student teachers has shifted to a more collaborative approach, emphasizing the importance of strong support networks. These networks involve cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and, in some cases, professional learning communities. One of the most significant recent developments has been the adoption of digital tools and virtual platforms to facilitate supervision. Virtual supervision enables student teachers to receive real-

time feedback, even when in-person interactions are not feasible due to geographical or logistical constraints (Remenick, 2019). This has made supervision more accessible and flexible, particularly for those in remote or underserved areas. The use of technology ensures that student teachers remain supported throughout their placements.

The increasing number of nontraditional student teachers has also influenced supervision practices. Many of these students juggle responsibilities outside of teaching, such as work or family commitments, necessitating more flexible supervision models. Asynchronous learning and online feedback tools have become crucial for supporting these students, enabling them to participate in supervision at their own convenience (Remenick, 2019). These tools ensure that nontraditional students receive the same support and guidance as their counterparts, accommodating their unique needs. This flexibility is essential for providing equitable support to all student teachers.

The move towards more personalized supervision models reflects a broader trend in education towards inclusivity and adaptability. As the student teaching population becomes more diverse, supervision practices must evolve to meet the needs of all teachers, regardless of their background or circumstances. Today's supervision models focus on inclusivity, ensuring every student teacher receives the support they need to succeed. This adaptability has become a defining feature of modern teacher education, preparing teachers to face the varied challenges of their careers. These models promote a more effective and supportive learning environment by embracing diversity and flexibility.

Virtual technologies have also enhanced field experiences for pre-service teachers, enabling real-time coaching and improved supervision quality through innovative digital methods (Billingsley, 2014). These technological tools enable more personalized and flexible

supervision models, accommodating the unique schedules and needs of nontraditional student teachers. The ability to record and review lessons has also enhanced reflective practices, as student teachers can critically analyze their teaching methods and make informed improvements. This technological shift not only addresses logistical challenges but also promotes a more inclusive and equitable approach to teacher supervision, ensuring all student teachers have the opportunity to succeed (Liu et al., 2018).

The Danielson Framework

The Danielson Framework for Teaching has emerged as a widely adopted model for teacher supervision and evaluation. It categorizes teaching into four essential domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities (Kindall et al., 2017). These domains encompass critical skills for effective teaching, providing a valuable structure for formative and summative assessments (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). Each domain includes specific components that illustrate effective teaching, allowing supervisors to offer more targeted feedback. This structured approach enables teachers to provide detailed and focused feedback, helping them improve their practices systematically.

A significant strength of the Danielson Framework is its emphasis on reflection and continuous professional growth. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practices within each domain, fostering a culture of ongoing improvement (Kettler & Reddy, 2019; Remenick, 2019). This reflective process is crucial in enabling teachers to identify areas for growth and take ownership of their professional development. By promoting self-reflection, the framework allows teachers to be more proactive in their own learning, resulting in more effective teaching practices. It creates a supportive environment where teachers can continuously refine their skills and methodologies.

The Danielson Framework has significantly influenced contemporary supervision by shifting the emphasis from mere evaluation to a holistic approach prioritizing professional growth. Supervisors using this framework provide detailed and specific feedback aligned with the four domains, helping teachers to enhance various aspects of their practice (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). This consistency in supervision encourages teachers to reflect on their practice and make informed decisions about their professional development. Additionally, the framework's emphasis on professional responsibilities, such as participating in learning communities and engaging in self-reflection, aligns with current trends in teacher education. These trends emphasize the importance of collaboration and lifelong learning (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020).

Additionally, research has demonstrated that the Danielson Framework enhances teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. According to Darling-Hammond (2013), teachers who engage in structured reflection and receive focused feedback are more likely to feel competent and motivated in their roles. This connection between structured supervision and teacher satisfaction highlights the importance of comprehensive evaluation models, such as the Danielson Framework. Such models foster a supportive and effective educational environment, enabling teachers to meet the demands of modern classrooms. The framework thus supports a reflective and growth-oriented teaching culture.

Opportunities of Virtual Supervision

Virtual supervision in teacher education has opened new avenues for enhancing teacher preparation programs. This section explores the benefits of virtual supervision, with a focus on addressing geographic challenges, promoting educational equity, and facilitating professional development. It highlights how virtual supervision supports reflective practice and enhances

collaboration among student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors. These innovations solve longstanding challenges in teacher education by overcoming traditional barriers. Virtual supervision ensures equitable, high-quality support for all student teachers by leveraging digital tools and resources.

Addressing Geographic Challenges and Educational Equity

Virtual supervision has proven to be a highly effective solution for addressing geographic challenges in teacher preparation, especially for student teachers in rural or underserved areas. Liu et al. (2018) noted that virtual supervision provides critical insights into the unique educational challenges of rural communities, while ensuring these areas receive the same level of support as urban schools. By eliminating the need for physical travel, virtual supervision promotes equitable access to supervision, allowing student teachers in remote locations to benefit from the expertise of university supervisors. Petit et al. (2023) also noted that virtual supervision alleviates logistical burdens for supervisors, allowing for more frequent and personalized feedback sessions, which in turn foster an inclusive and supportive teaching environment **(**Odo, 2022).

Additionally, virtual supervision addresses staffing shortages and logistical issues that often hinder student teachers in rural or isolated schools. By allowing supervisors to observe lessons remotely, institutions can ensure that all student teachers receive consistent support, regardless of their geographic location (McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020). Liu et al. (2018) emphasized that virtual supervision catalyzes educational equity, enabling supervisors to provide more detailed and consistent feedback, enhancing student teachers' professional development. This increased feedback loop promotes the equitable distribution of resources, ensuring that

geography does not compromise the quality of teacher preparation (Aldemir & Ardley, 2014; Beckmann & Ehmke, 2023)

Virtual supervision is a powerful tool for bridging the educational equity gap within teacher training programs. By expanding access to quality supervision for student teachers in diverse educational settings, virtual supervision ensures that geographic isolation does not lead to educational inequities. The reduced financial and logistical barriers associated with virtual supervision also allow institutions to invest more in quality feedback and ongoing professional support, thereby improving teacher education programs (Andzik & Kranak, 2021). This approach addresses the challenges faced by student teachers in remote areas and contributes to the enhancement of teacher training and development.

Furthermore, the integration of virtual supervision in teacher education has highlighted the importance of digital literacy among student teachers, particularly those in geographically isolated areas. Digital literacy is now recognized as a vital competency for educators, enabling them to utilize technological tools for teaching and professional development effectively. According to Harris & Adetunji (2021), building digital literacy skills through virtual supervision not only enhances the teaching capabilities of student teachers but also prepares them to meet the demands of modern classrooms. This approach ensures that student teachers in remote areas are not left behind in technological advancements and are equipped to provide high-quality education to their students. By emphasizing digital literacy, virtual supervision contributes to a more equitable education system where all student teachers, regardless of location, are well-prepared to succeed in their careers.

Enhancing Professional Growth Through Reflective Practice

One significant benefit of virtual supervision is its positive impact on professional growth through reflective practice. Recording and reviewing lessons enable student teachers to critically assess their teaching methods critically, thereby deepening their understanding of instructional practices (Tripp & Rich, 2011*).* This reflective process is crucial for ongoing professional development, as it encourages student teachers to adjust their techniques and strategies based on their observations**.** Odo (2022) found that virtual supervision enhances reflection by allowing student teachers to review lessons at their own pace. This deeper reflection enhances teaching competence, leading to increased self-efficacy and confidence in their teaching abilities, which are essential for long-term professional growth **(**Kormos & Wisdom, 2022)**.**

Additionally, virtual supervision strengthens the link between feedback and reflective practice, making the feedback loop more effective. By reviewing recorded teaching sessions, student teachers can analyze their strategies and identify areas for improvement more effectively (Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020). This ability to revisit lessons provides a structured approach to integrating feedback into practice, resulting in improved teaching outcomes. Liu et al. (2018) emphasized that receiving and applying feedback through virtual supervision fosters a continuous learning environment that supports professional growth. This model refines teaching techniques and helps student teachers develop adaptive strategies, enhancing their professional skills (Beckmann & Ehmke, 2023).

The flexibility of virtual supervision also supports reflective practice. Liu et al. (2018) (2022) highlighted that it allows for both synchronous and asynchronous feedback by giving student teachers the time and space to reflect on their teaching at their own pace. This flexibility is essential for student teachers, as it ensures they have ample opportunities to digest feedback,

reflect on their progress, and make informed changes to their teaching methods. Lynch et al. (2021) noted that this flexibility, combined with ongoing reflection, maximizes the benefits of virtual supervision by encouraging continuous improvement in instructional approaches. As a result, student teachers can integrate reflective practice more effectively into their professional development, leading to sustained growth over time.

Furthermore, virtual supervision encourages the development of higher-order thinking skills, which are vital for professional success. By consistently engaging in reflective practice through reviewing recorded lessons, student teachers are better equipped to analyze complex teaching situations and make data-driven decisions about their practices (Aldemir & Ardley, 2014). Van Boxtel (2017) further emphasized that virtual supervision allows student teachers to actively engage in self-assessment actively, fostering a sense of autonomy and responsibility for their professional growth. This process enhances their ability to reflect on their practice and prepares them for the lifelong learning required in the ever-evolving field of education.

Collaboration and Communication in the Triad Model

The triad model, which involves the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor, benefits significantly from virtual supervision, as it fosters enhanced communication and collaboration. Liu et al. (2018) found that virtual platforms enable frequent communication between the three parties, promoting real-time feedback and discussion. This continuous communication allows immediate intervention and guidance when challenges arise, supporting student-teacher development. The increased accessibility of supervisors through virtual platforms ensures that issues are addressed promptly, leading to more responsive and adaptive teaching practices (Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020). Virtual supervision fosters a stronger relationship among the triad members by creating a more collaborative environment. Petit et al. (2023)

highlighted that virtual platforms facilitate easier scheduling of meetings and discussions, allowing for more regular check-ins and feedback sessions. This increased engagement enables the student teacher to implement changes more quickly, thereby improving teaching performance. The flexibility of virtual supervision allows for a more dynamic and supportive learning experience, as all triad members can communicate and collaborate more efficiently (Liu et al., 2018).

Integrating virtual supervision within the triad model also promotes a more inclusive and equitable approach to teacher education. By utilizing digital platforms, all triad members can participate in the supervision process regardless of their physical location, which is particularly beneficial for student teachers in remote or underserved areas. According to Lynch et al. (2021), this approach ensures that student teachers receive consistent and high-quality feedback, fostering a sense of community and support among the triad members. Sharing resources, lesson plans, and recorded teaching sessions through these platforms enhances collaborative learning and professional development. This inclusive model helps bridge the gap between urban and rural education settings, ensuring that all student teachers have access to the same level of mentorship and support, thereby contributing to a more equitable education system.

Virtual supervision within the triad model also encourages the development of digital literacy skills among all participants. As student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors engage with various digital tools and platforms, they become more proficient in using technology for educational purposes. This proficiency benefits the immediate supervision process and prepares student teachers for integrating technology into their future classrooms. According to Burdina et al. (2019), the use of virtual supervision tools can lead to the development of innovative teaching strategies and the effective utilization of digital resources in

lesson planning and delivery. Furthermore, the exposure to diverse technological tools helps student teachers become more adaptable and resourceful, qualities that are essential in the ever-changing field. By embedding digital literacy into the supervision process, the triad model ensures that future educators can meet the demands of modern teaching environments.

Challenges of Virtual Supervision

Virtual supervision has become an increasingly prevalent method for overseeing early childhood pre-service student teachers, primarily due to technological advancements and the necessity for remote learning solutions. While offering flexibility and accessibility, virtual supervision also introduces a unique set of challenges that can impact the effectiveness of teacher training. These challenges include a lack of hands-on experience, limited opportunities for in-person mentorship, and various technological barriers (Liu et al., 2018; Petit et al., 2023; Raikes et al., 2025). Understanding these issues is crucial for developing strategies to support pre-service teachers in a virtual environment. This section examines the challenges associated with virtual supervision and emphasizes the importance of addressing these issues to ensure the professional growth and preparedness of future educators. By examining these factors, educators can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of virtual supervision and work towards more effective solutions (Burbank et al., 2021)

Lack of Hands-On Experience and Mentorship

Elementary education pre-service student teachers face unique challenges with virtual supervision. One significant issue is the lack of hands-on experience, which is crucial for developing practical teaching skills. Virtual supervision often limits spontaneous, real-time interactions with young children, which are essential for learning classroom management and instructional techniques. Additionally, the absence of in-person mentorship can hinder the

development of a supportive and collaborative relationship between the supervisor and the student teacher. This can lead to feelings of isolation and a lack of immediate feedback, vital for professional growth. According to Anderson and Stillman (2013), the variability in the quality of mentoring experiences can further exacerbate these challenges, as the effectiveness of virtual supervision heavily depends on the skills and availability of the supervisors.

Another significant challenge is replicating the immersive and interactive nature of in-person classroom experiences. Virtual environments can limit the ability to observe and respond to young children's dynamic and often unpredictable behaviors. This hinders the development of critical classroom management skills and the ability to adapt teaching strategies in real-time (Clarke et al., 2014). The hands-on experience gained through direct interaction with students is essential for building confidence and competence in pre-service teachers. Without hands-on experience, student teachers may feel less prepared to handle the complexities of a real classroom setting. Moreover, the lack of physical presence can affect the ability to build rapport with students and understand their individual needs, which is essential in elementary education to foster effective teaching and learning (Dede et al., 2009). Virtual supervision may not provide the same opportunities for student teachers to develop these relationships, which could impact their ability to create a supportive and engaging learning environment (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Redmond et al., 2018).

Virtual supervision also limits the opportunity for nuanced observation and feedback. Virtual environments restrict the supervisor's ability to notice subtle classroom interactions, such as nonverbal cues from young children, which are often pivotal in elementary education (Clarke et al., 2014). Critical nuances of classroom dynamics can limit the effectiveness of feedback given to student teachers, potentially reducing their ability to adapt to children's needs and

behaviors Burbank et al., 2021). Direct and immediate feedback fosters reflective practice in pre-service teachers (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). Without such feedback, pre-service teachers may miss valuable learning opportunities, which can impede their professional growth and confidence in managing elementary education settings.

Technological Barriers

Technological barriers in virtual supervision include the steep learning curve associated with new digital tools and platforms. Both supervisors and student teachers may need to invest significant time and effort into mastering these technologies, which can detract from the focus on pedagogical development (Slay et al., 2020). The effectiveness of virtual supervision heavily depends on the user's proficiency with the technology, which can vary widely (Redmond et al., 2018). This variability can lead to inconsistent supervision experiences and potentially hinder the professional growth of pre-service teachers (Maes et al., 2022). Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancements means that supervisors and student teachers must continuously update their skills to keep up with new tools and platforms. This ongoing need for professional development can be resource-intensive and may not always be feasible for all participants. Institutions must provide ongoing support and training to ensure supervisors and student teachers can effectively utilize virtual supervision technologies, which is crucial for maintaining quality and consistency (Dede et al., 2009).

Technological barriers can also exacerbate feelings of isolation among pre-service teachers, who may struggle to access support promptly (Redmond et al., 2018). Limited face-to-face interaction with supervisors and peers in virtual settings can lead to detachment, hindering the development of a professional learning community, which is crucial for teacher growth and collaboration (Clarke et al., 2014; Maes et al., 2022). This isolation can impact motivation and

engagement, which are critical for the success of pre-service teachers navigating complex educational tasks (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). Additionally, some educators face challenges in acquiring sufficient technical skills, which can create disparities in supervision quality (Slay et al., 2020; Chen, 2017). These disparities highlight the need for institutional investment in technology training and support to bridge these gaps and enhance the virtual supervision experience. Ensuring that both supervisors and student teachers are proficient with the necessary technology is essential for effective virtual supervision.

Quality of Virtual Supervision

Ensuring the quality of virtual supervision involves addressing the potential for reduced engagement and interaction in a digital environment. Virtual supervision can sometimes lead to a more passive learning experience, where student teachers may not feel as involved or accountable as they would in a face-to-face setting (Dede et al., 2009; Redmond et al., 2018). Fostering a sense of community and active participation is essential for effective virtual supervision (Dede et al., 2009). Strategies such as regular interactive sessions, collaborative projects, and peer feedback can help enhance engagement and ensure that student teachers remain actively involved in their learning process. The quality of feedback provided in virtual supervision can have a significant impact on the professional development of pre-service teachers. High-quality feedback should be timely, specific, and actionable, helping student teachers to identify areas for improvement and develop their teaching practices (Clarke et al., 2014).

However, providing such feedback in a virtual environment can be challenging due to the lack of immediate, face-to-face interaction. Using technology to facilitate detailed and constructive feedback, such as through video annotations and real-time discussions, is important

to student teachers' success. Ensuring that supervisors are trained in these techniques is crucial for maintaining the quality of virtual supervision (Maes et al., 2022). A critical aspect of quality virtual supervision is the capacity to create a sense of presence and engagement that mirrors in-person interactions. Research by Dede et al. (2009) suggests that fostering a sense of connection through structured activities and consistent feedback enhances the motivation and accountability of pre-service teachers. Clear, detailed feedback and interactive supervision strategies, such as video reviews and collaborative reflection sessions, are essential for fostering an engaging and effective learning environment (Clarke et al., 2014).

Nontraditional Student Teachers: Unique Perspectives and Challenges

Nontraditional student teachers represent a growing and dynamic population within teacher education programs, bringing unique perspectives and experiences to the field. These individuals are often older, balancing their studies with work, family, or other responsibilities, and may be returning to education after a period of absence. These students contribute maturity and real-world insights that enrich their approach to teaching. However, their non-linear educational journeys often come with challenges, such as struggles with time management, limited campus engagement, and the need to navigate biases and technological gaps. This section delves into the multifaceted experiences of nontraditional student teachers, exploring how their diverse backgrounds shape their contributions to education and examining the barriers they face. By addressing these challenges through tailored institutional support and inclusive practices, teacher education programs can empower nontraditional students to thrive, fostering their success and capacity to make meaningful impacts in the classroom.

Balancing Responsibilities and Time Management

Nontraditional student teachers, characterized by diverse life experiences, often return to education driven by a desire for career advancement or personal fulfillment (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). These individuals bring varied skill sets and a mature outlook, which can positively influence their approach to teaching (Chen, 2017). However, balancing their responsibilities with academic demands often means they have less time and fewer resources than their traditional counterparts (Evitts, 2022). Studies show that nontraditional students are more likely to be employed full-time and manage family obligations, making time management a significant barrier to academic success (Evitts, 2022). This balancing act impacts their ability to participate fully in campus activities or group projects, often limiting their opportunities for peer support and collaboration, which are crucial in teacher training. Thus, the complexities of managing various responsibilities can stress their educational performance and overall well-being.

Additionally, nontraditional student teachers may experience feelings of isolation within the academic community (Clair, 2024**).** Many nontraditional students report difficulty finding social connections on campus due to generational differences and life circumstances that set them apart from younger students (Grabowski et al., 2016). The lack of integration into campus life can also impact mental health and overall motivation, as these students may feel disconnected from their learning community. Studies suggest nontraditional students benefit significantly from mentorship and structured peer networks, which can alleviate isolation and build a sense of community (3et al., 2024). Universities that offer designated spaces, flexible scheduling, and virtual support options have shown higher retention rates for nontraditional students, underscoring the importance of tailored resources in fostering their success (Sutherland et al., 2023). When institutions prioritize creating an inclusive community, nontraditional

students often feel a greater sense of belonging, which can positively influence their commitment to educational goals.

Nontraditional student teachers often bring a wealth of personal and professional experiences that shape their educational perspectives. These experiences can serve as valuable assets, enabling them to connect with diverse students and bring real-world relevance to their teaching (Evitts, 2022). However, these experiences can also create unique stressors, as nontraditional students may feel pressured to prove themselves in an academic environment dominated by younger peers. Studies suggest that nontraditional students frequently encounter subtle biases within educational settings, where their maturity and life experiences may not always be valued (Chen, 2017). Such biases can lead to feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt, which in turn impact their confidence and engagement in teacher training programs. Creating spaces that value these diverse experiences can enhance the sense of belonging for nontraditional students, ultimately helping them to thrive (3et al., 2024).

Another distinctive aspect of the nontraditional student experience is their approach to learning. Many nontraditional students approach their studies with a practical, goal-oriented mindset, often prioritizing applicable knowledge over theoretical insights (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). This pragmatic approach may sometimes conflict with conventional academic expectations, which frequently rely heavily on abstract theories and methodologies. For example, nontraditional students often seek immediate classroom applications for pedagogical concepts, which may contradict the more exploratory, theoretical focus of teacher education (Clair, 2024). Institutions that recognize and adapt to these differing learning styles can create more inclusive and supportive environments. This, in turn, will allow nontraditional students to capitalize on their strengths. Incorporating experiential learning opportunities, such as case studies or

practicum experiences, can help bridge this gap by offering immediate, practical applications of educational theory.

Unique Challenges of Nontraditional Students

Nontraditional student teachers face distinct technological challenges, particularly in programs that rely heavily on online or blended learning. Research indicates that while these students are highly motivated, they may lack the technical skills necessary for effective online learning, which impacts their ability to engage fully with course materials **(**Getenet et al., 2024). In one study, nontraditional students expressed frustration with the assumption that all students possess the same level of technological proficiency, suggesting that additional digital literacy support would enhance their learning experience (Meuleman et al., 2014). This gap in digital skills can also contribute to lower levels of self-efficacy, as students feel less confident in navigating educational technologies (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Financial constraints further compound the challenges faced by nontraditional student teachers. Many rely on part-time enrollment to balance work and academic responsibilities, which limits their eligibility for financial aid (Thomas et al., 2020). Studies have shown that the inability to qualify for full financial support often prolongs their time to degree completion, which increases the financial burden and affects overall academic performance (Castleman & Meyer, 2019).

In addition to financial and technological barriers, nontraditional students often face feelings of role conflict as they balance responsibilities across multiple areas of their lives. Many nontraditional students report a constant tension between their academic roles and other life roles, such as caregiver, employee, or spouse, which can lead to stress and burnout (Castleman & Meyer, 2019). This role conflict is further exacerbated when institutions fail to offer flexible learning options that accommodate their diverse needs, like asynchronous classes or hybrid

schedules (Sutherland et al., 2023). Research has shown that institutions offering flexible course delivery and support services specifically designed for nontraditional students have experienced increased student satisfaction and retention (Meuleman et al., 2014). Furthermore, psychological resilience is a critical factor that enables nontraditional students to persist despite these challenges. Studies indicate that students with high resilience often exhibit better academic outcomes, suggesting that interventions focused on building resilience could benefit nontraditional students (Bye et al., 2019). By addressing these areas, educational institutions can create an environment where nontraditional students feel supported in all aspects of their lives, ultimately contributing to their academic success and well-being.

For nontraditional students, academic pursuits are often interwoven with various life roles, leading to complex time management challenges that can affect their educational success. Many nontraditional students report difficulty fitting academic assignments into their schedules, particularly when they have dependent care responsibilities or employment obligations (Beckwith, 2023). As they balance multiple commitments, nontraditional students often face disruptions to their study routines, which can hinder their consistent progress in coursework (Evitts, 2022). This constant negotiation between academic and personal responsibilities can contribute to chronic stress, impacting their mental health and educational outcomes. Institutions that offer flexible deadlines, online options, and hybrid course formats help mitigate these challenges by accommodating the unique time constraints faced by nontraditional learners **(**Hills & Peacock, 2022**).**

Psychological and Social Barriers

Additionally, research highlights the importance of providing mental health and wellness support tailored explicitly for nontraditional students, who often experience higher levels of

stress due to their multiple life roles (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Nontraditional students may be hesitant to seek mental health support on campus due to the stigma associated with it or because they feel disconnected from traditional campus life (Meuleman et al., 2014). Access to virtual counseling services or support groups designed for older students can make a significant difference, offering them accessible ways to manage stress and foster resilience. Studies suggest that wellness initiatives tailored to nontraditional students can enhance their academic retention and overall satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of institutional support that extends beyond academic accommodations alone (Thomas et al., 2020). With comprehensive support services that address both mental health and educational needs, institutions can enhance the experiences of nontraditional students and help them balance their multifaceted responsibilities effectively.

Perspectives on Supervision from Previous Studies

Supervision is critical to teacher preparation, particularly for nontraditional student teachers who bring unique experiences and face distinct challenges. As teacher education evolves, research highlights the importance of tailored supervision approaches that address the diverse needs of these individuals. Effective supervision goes beyond traditional practices by incorporating culturally responsive strategies, virtual and blended models, and a focus on fostering professional growth. This section examines the dimensions of supervision, highlighting their importance in supporting nontraditional student teachers and enhancing their readiness for the classroom.

Culturally Responsive Supervision

Cultural responsiveness is described as the ability to recognize and integrate a student's cultural background into the classroom environment (Larson et al., 2018). Supervisors trained in multicultural sensitivity can facilitate discussions that help student teachers navigate cultural

dynamics within the classroom, promoting a more inclusive learning environment. This approach not only benefits the supervisees but also enriches the classroom experience for their future students, as nontraditional teachers are encouraged to integrate their cultural insights into their teaching practices (Watkins & Callahan, 2019). Thus, culturally responsive supervision is increasingly recognized as essential in supporting nontraditional student teachers, who may feel marginalized or overlooked in conventional supervisory models (Soheilian et al., 2014).

Culturally responsive supervision has also emerged as a crucial factor for nontraditional student teachers, particularly for those from diverse backgrounds. Supervisors with multicultural competence can facilitate dialogues that encourage student teachers to examine their own cultural identities and how these influence their teaching philosophies (Lombardi, 2001). For instance, nontraditional students from different cultural or socio-economic backgrounds may bring unique insights into equity, classroom inclusivity, and culturally relevant teaching practices (Soheilian et al., 2014). Research indicates that supervisors who actively encourage discussions about cultural knowledge create environments where nontraditional student teachers feel comfortable integrating their diverse experiences into their teaching practices. Research suggests that supervisors who actively promote these discussions foster an environment where nontraditional students feel comfortable integrating cultural knowledge into their teaching (Griffin et al., 2016). This culturally responsive approach benefits student teachers and enriches the learning experience of their future students by fostering a more inclusive educational environment.

Virtual and Blended Supervision Models

The shift toward virtual and blended supervision models in teacher education has also brought unique considerations for supporting nontraditional student teachers. Virtual

supervision, often perceived as more flexible, can allow nontraditional students to receive guidance in ways that align with their schedules. Studies suggest that this relationship is crucial for supervisee development, particularly when fostering a supportive environment where students feel comfortable seeking advice and discussing challenges (Hughes & Thompson, 2021). To bridge the gap, recent research recommends combining virtual supervision with occasional in-person meetings or synchronous video sessions to maintain the relational depth that is often easier to achieve in face-to-face interactions (Redmond et al., 2018). Additionally, virtual supervision has been shown to offer unique opportunities for supervisors to provide timely feedback through recorded observations, allowing student teachers to reflect on their practice with greater depth and precision (Dede et al., 2009). By adopting a blended approach that integrates virtual flexibility with relational support, supervisors can better meet the needs of nontraditional student teachers, fostering a balanced and practical learning experience.

The shift toward virtual and blended supervision has introduced new dynamics in supporting nontraditional student teachers, offering both opportunities and challenges. Virtual supervision models, often employed to accommodate the schedules of nontraditional students, allow supervisors to provide timely feedback and foster flexibility in training (Scheeler et al., 2012). However, studies indicate that virtual supervision may sometimes lack the relational depth present in traditional face-to-face supervision, which can be crucial for student teachers who rely on close mentorship to build confidence (Zaheer & Munir, 2020). To address this limitation, some institutions are experimenting with hybrid supervision models that combine online sessions with occasional in-person meetings to maintain interpersonal connections (Redmond et al., 2018). These hybrid approaches allow for the adaptability of virtual supervision while preserving the relational elements necessary for a supportive supervisory experience.

Supporting Professional Growth

Effective supervision plays a pivotal role in supporting nontraditional student teachers, whose life experiences and motivations often differ from those of traditional student teachers. Research suggests that supervisors who build strong, collaborative relationships with nontraditional students foster a sense of trust and support, which positively impacts their professional development (Lombardi, 2001). For instance, supervisors who demonstrate an understanding of the students' unique circumstances, such as balancing work and family, can adapt their feedback and support strategies accordingly. These supervisory adjustments help nontraditional students feel more understood and validated, which enhances their commitment to the teaching profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Supervisors who create supportive and empathetic environments are more likely to witness improved performance and engagement from nontraditional student teachers, leading to positive developmental outcomes.

Supervision plays a crucial role in preparing nontraditional student teachers for the classroom; however, research suggests that traditional supervisory models may not always align with their needs. Nontraditional students often bring a wealth of experience and unique perspectives, which can be either a resource or a source of tension depending on the supervisory approach (Lombardi, 2001). Supervisors who adopt an empathetic, flexible approach to mentorship are more likely to establish strong connections with nontraditional student teachers, validating their prior experiences while guiding them through new pedagogical challenges (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Studies show that supervisors who build collaborative relationships with nontraditional students create a more conducive environment for feedback and professional growth, helping them feel supported and respected (Evitts, 2022). This approach

allows nontraditional students to draw on their personal insights while adopting best teaching practices.

Effective supervision plays a vital role in preparing nontraditional student teachers for the complexities of modern classrooms. Culturally responsive supervision fosters an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued, thereby enriching the development of student teachers and their future teaching practices. Virtual and blended supervision models offer flexibility and accessibility, accommodating the unique schedules and needs of nontraditional learners while preserving opportunities for relational depth and timely feedback. Additionally, focusing on professional growth ensures that supervision provides the support necessary for student teachers to refine their skills, build confidence, and succeed in their roles. By adopting these innovative and empathetic approaches, educational institutions can better equip nontraditional student teachers to thrive in their careers and contribute meaningfully to their students' learning experiences.

Teacher Shortages and the Role of Alternative Certification Programs

Alternative certification programs (ACPs) provide expedited pathways into the teaching profession for individuals who have not traditionally followed educational routes. These programs are designed to address urgent teacher shortages, particularly in high-need areas, by fast-tracking candidates into classrooms. Unlike traditional programs that require extensive coursework and student teaching, ACPs enable candidates to begin teaching while completing their certification requirements, thereby responding to the demand for a diverse and skilled workforce. Many ACPs focus on specific subject areas or geographic regions, targeting schools with significant vacancies, such as those in urban and rural settings or institutions serving underserved communities. This targeted approach fills critical teaching positions and attracts a

broader, more diverse pool of candidates, including mid-career professionals and individuals from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Consequently, ACPs have become integral in balancing the need for qualified teachers to foster inclusive and diverse classroom environments.

Addressing Teacher Shortages

The structure of Alternative Certification Programs (ACPs) varies significantly across states and institutions, reflecting efforts to adapt to specific regional needs and state policies. These programs are typically designed for individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree in fields outside of education, offering them an expedited pathway into the teaching profession. Instead of requiring extensive traditional coursework, ACPs focus on targeted training, allowing participants to begin teaching early in their program while completing certification requirements. This model emphasizes practical, "on-the-job" experience in real classrooms, providing candidates with immediate exposure to the teaching profession. Program durations can vary widely, ranging from a few months to comprehensive timelines that mirror traditional teacher education programs (Teachers of Tomorrow, 2024). The flexibility of ACPs allows them to meet the diverse needs of aspiring teachers and school districts, particularly in areas with urgent staffing shortages.

The adaptability of ACPs is critical in addressing teacher shortages effectively, particularly in high-need areas. Some states have customized their ACPs to address challenges specific to rural or underserved regions, where staffing gaps are often more severe. For example, these tailored programs may offer housing stipends, loan forgiveness, or other financial incentives to attract candidates to these areas. By aligning program structures with local needs, ACPs can help fill teaching positions in communities that struggle to recruit and retain educators.

These targeted approaches address immediate shortages and contribute to building a sustainable pipeline of teachers for underserved areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

Structure and Flexibility of ACPs

To meet the diverse needs of potential candidates, ACPs are frequently provided through partnerships with universities, nonprofit organizations, school districts, and online platforms. These partnerships help ensure that the programs are accessible to a wide range of individuals, regardless of their geographic location or professional background. Well-known models include Teach for America, which places recent graduates into high-need schools after intensive, short-term training, and residency programs like the Boston Teacher Residency, which offers extensive mentorship and often culminates in a master's degree (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Programs like these cater to a diverse range of candidates, including career switchers and professionals from specialized fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Many ACPs provide incentives for high-need areas, offering stipends or tuition reductions to make the programs more accessible. For example, some ACPs partner with organizations to provide financial aid, attracting mid-career professionals who are concerned about leaving their careers. By creating such pathways, ACPs open up teaching opportunities for those with specialized knowledge and professional experience, thereby addressing gaps in hard-to-staff subjects and providing students with exposure to a range of expertise in the classroom.

The flexibility of ACPs also allows for innovative approaches to teacher preparation. For example, some programs incorporate hybrid models that combine online coursework with in-person teaching experiences, making it easier for candidates to balance their training with other commitments. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for mid-career professionals transitioning from different fields and needing to maintain their current employment while completing

certification requirements (Liu et al., 2018). Additionally, hybrid models can offer a more personalized learning experience, enabling candidates to progress at their own pace while still receiving the necessary support and guidance. This approach can also help reduce the financial burden on candidates, as they can continue working while completing their training (Teachers of Tomorrow, 2024). Overall, the flexibility of ACPs makes them an attractive option for a diverse range of individuals looking to enter the teaching profession.

Partnership and Models

ACPs have effectively addressed teacher shortages, particularly in areas and subjects where vacancies are difficult to fill, such as special education and STEM fields. Research indicates that approximately 20% of new teachers in the United States now enter through ACPs, underscoring the role these programs play in meeting the educational workforce's growing demands. In addition to addressing shortages, ACPs are beneficial in recruiting diverse educators who better reflect the demographics of their students. Data shows that ACPs attract a higher proportion of minority candidates and men than traditional certification pathways, contributing to greater classroom diversity. This diversity is crucial in high-poverty and urban schools, where students often benefit from seeing educators with whom they share cultural backgrounds or experiences. Additionally, ACPs enable professionals with expertise in specific fields, such as scientists or engineers, to bring their knowledge directly into the classroom, thereby enhancing student learning through real-world insights. Therefore, ACPs address the quantitative need for more teachers and the qualitative benefits of a diverse, highly skilled educator workforce.

ACPs help create pathways for those passionate about education who may not have initially pursued a teaching degree. These programs often attract professionals seeking a career change or individuals motivated to give back to their communities, especially in high-need

school districts. Many ACP graduates bring valuable life and career experiences that can enhance their teaching, particularly in secondary education, where subject-specific expertise is often critical. Such candidates can help fill gaps in specialized subjects, and their practical experience allows them to contextualize lessons in ways that resonate with students. In addition to drawing skilled professionals into the teaching field, ACPs have the advantage of being highly adaptable and evolving to meet the changing needs of the education landscape. In this way, ACPs serve not only as a stopgap solution to teacher shortages but also as a means to enrich the profession with diverse and knowledgeable individuals who can impact student success. The diversity brought by ACP candidates benefits student learning and creates a more inclusive school environment. Studies have shown that students perform better academically and socially when they have teachers who reflect their backgrounds and experiences. This representation can help to break down stereotypes and foster a more inclusive and supportive school culture (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Challenges and Criticisms

Despite their advantages, ACPs require assistance with preparing their graduates. One primary concern is that ACP candidates may receive a different level of pedagogical training than those in traditional teacher preparation programs. Studies suggest that some ACP teachers feel underprepared in critical areas such as classroom management, differentiation, and lesson planning, which are essential for effective teaching. This under-preparedness is particularly concerning in high-need schools, where students often need more social and academic challenges and require skilled educators. The focus on on-the-job training can sometimes lead to an uneven experience, with teachers needing more support as they navigate these challenges.

Critics argue that while ACPs address immediate staffing needs, they may inadvertently lead to increased teacher turnover in these high-need schools if candidates are not adequately prepared to handle the classroom's complexities. To address these concerns, some ACPs have begun incorporating more comprehensive training modules focusing on classroom management and instructional strategies. These enhancements aim to better prepare candidates for teaching in high-need environments. Additionally, ongoing professional development and mentorship programs are being implemented to provide continuous support for ACP graduates, helping them to develop the skills necessary for long-term success in the classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2024).

Retention of ACP teachers also presents a significant challenge. Research indicates that ACP teachers are less likely to remain in the profession long-term than their traditionally trained counterparts, particularly if they require robust mentorship or support systems. For instance, residency models like the Boston Teacher Residency have higher retention rates due to their emphasis on mentorship, whereas programs with limited support may see lower retention rates. Moreover, with consistent backing, ACP teachers may be better equipped to handle the demands of teaching, thereby reducing the risk of burnout and early exit from the profession. To address these challenges, some ACPs have implemented additional training, mentorship, and professional development to support their graduates. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure that ACPs bring more teachers into the workforce and support them in building sustainable careers in education.

Illinois Alternative Certification Pathways

In Illinois, ACPs play a crucial role in addressing teacher shortages and enhancing the diversity of the educator workforce. The state has implemented initiatives such as the Early

Childhood Access Consortium for Equity, established by HB 2878, which aims to expand access to early childhood education by creating pathways for diverse candidates to enter the teaching workforce (Illinois Department of Early Childhood, 2023). This initiative is part of Illinois' broader goal to address workforce shortages in early childhood education. It helps professionals with prior experience gain necessary credentials through alternative certification pathways. These programs support candidates from varied backgrounds, including nontraditional and mid-career professionals, by providing flexible learning options and financial assistance. This approach reduces barriers to entering the field and ensures a steady influx of qualified educators.

Illinois' ACPs align with the state's commitment to workforce diversity, emphasizing support for candidates from historically underrepresented communities, such as rural areas and communities with limited access to traditional teacher preparation programs. By facilitating entry into the early childhood workforce, these ACPs help meet the demand for qualified educators while ensuring that classrooms better reflect the state's diverse population. In addition to financial assistance, these programs often include mentorship and on-the-job training. These are essential for preparing teachers to meet the unique challenges of high-need schools and early childhood environments (Illinois Department of Early Childhood, 2023). This comprehensive support structure is designed to enhance teacher effectiveness and retention.

Illinois proactively addresses teacher shortages and educational equity through these targeted ACP initiatives by enabling more accessible pathways to certification and professional development. This approach helps fill immediate teaching vacancies and supports long-term workforce sustainability and retention by equipping new teachers with the skills and support necessary to thrive. As Illinois continues implementing ACPs in collaboration with educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and local communities, the state is working towards a

robust, diverse, and well-prepared teaching workforce. This workforce can adapt to the evolving needs of its students and communities (Illinois Department of Early Childhood, 2023). The goal is to create a sustainable model that benefits educators and students.

Illinois has also focused on creating robust support systems for ACP graduates to improve retention rates. Programs like the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative (INTC) provide new teachers with ongoing professional development and mentorship opportunities. These initiatives are designed to help teachers navigate the challenges of their first few years in the classroom, which are often the most difficult. By offering continuous support and professional growth opportunities, Illinois aims to reduce teacher turnover and ensure ACP graduates remain in the profession long-term. Additionally, the state has implemented policies to provide financial incentives, such as loan forgiveness and stipends, to encourage teachers to stay in high-need areas (Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2025**).** These measures are crucial for maintaining a stable and committed teaching workforce.

Illinois' ACPs align with the state's commitment to workforce diversity, emphasizing support for candidates from historically underrepresented communities, such as rural areas and communities with limited access to traditional teacher preparation programs. By facilitating entry into the early childhood workforce, these ACPs help meet the demand for qualified educators while ensuring that classrooms better reflect the state's diverse population. In addition to financial assistance, these programs often include mentorship and on-the-job training, which are essential for preparing teachers to meet the unique challenges of high-need schools and early childhood environments (Illinois Department of Early Childhood, 2023).

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has explored existing research on virtual supervision, the experiences of nontraditional student teachers, and the broader context of teacher shortages and alternative certification programs. Chapter 3 will describe the study's research methodology, detailing the design, data collection, and analysis procedures used to investigate the experiences of nontraditional student teachers under virtual supervision.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods employed to explore the experiences of nontraditional student teachers who were supervised virtually during their student teaching placements. Guided by the central research question—What are the experiences of nontraditional student teachers supervised virtually during their student teaching placements? This chapter presents the qualitative action research approach selected and details the rationale behind this choice. The chapter further elaborates on participant recruitment strategies, explaining the purposeful sampling method in detail. Additionally, it clarifies the data collection process, specifically semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted at multiple intervals. Finally, this introduction previews the discussions on the research context, the researcher's positionality, and the ethical considerations relevant to this qualitative inquiry.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to gain a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences of nontraditional student teachers engaged in virtual supervision. Qualitative research is grounded in constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, which posit that knowledge is socially constructed through human interaction and that reality is multiple and context-dependent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These paradigms emphasize understanding individuals' lived experiences and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences within specific social and cultural contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Such an approach aligns with the study's objective to explore the nuanced, personal, and context-specific experiences of adult learners engaged in virtual supervision. While qualitative research is often critiqued for its limited generalizability, its strength lies in providing rich, detailed data that reveal deeper insights into individuals' lived realities (Yin, 2018). In this study, qualitative

methods allowed for flexibility, responsiveness to emerging insights, and emphasis on participant voice—all essential for capturing the layered experiences of nontraditional student teachers. Underlying the qualitative methodology are several key assumptions: that meaning is subjective and constructed through interactions with others, that the researcher's positionality influences data collection and analysis, and that context plays a critical role in shaping participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These assumptions underscore the importance of examining participant perspectives within the specific social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which they are situated. One of the primary advantages of qualitative research is its ability to produce thick, rich descriptions that offer a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena. However, a noted disadvantage is the challenge of generalizability, as findings are often context-specific and based on small sample sizes. Additionally, the researcher's influence and subjectivity, while acknowledged and embraced in qualitative approaches, may also introduce bias if not carefully managed through strategies like reflexivity, member checking, and audit trails.

The qualitative design employed in this study is a case study methodology, which facilitates an in-depth exploration of a specific, bounded system—in this case, the virtual supervision experiences of three nontraditional student teachers within one alternative certification program. Case studies enable researchers to examine a phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2018). This method is particularly appropriate when a deep understanding of process and meaning is desired, as it enables the researcher to examine relationships, behaviors, and influences holistically (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this study, the case is bounded by the specific timeframe of student teaching, the virtual supervision structure, and the

characteristics of the nontraditional learners involved. One benefit of using a case study design is the opportunity for detailed analysis of the interplay between context and experience, though this depth can sometimes limit broader applicability. For instance, Cunningham (2021) employed a case study to investigate high school teachers' adaptation to blended learning, illustrating the effectiveness of this method in capturing educators' authentic responses to instructional change.

Action Research Approach

This study also employs an action research approach, grounded explicitly in teacher inquiry, to promote reflective practice and professional growth. Action research is defined as a participatory, systematic process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action, often to improve their own practices and the settings in which they work (Mertler, 2021). It is rooted in pragmatist and critical paradigms, which emphasize action, collaboration, and social change. This methodology prioritizes practical, context-specific solutions and acknowledges the significance of the researcher's positionality and agency. Unlike traditional research that often separates the researcher from the subject of study, action research embeds the researcher within the context. It encourages iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Herr & Anderson, 2014). These features made action research an appropriate choice for this study, as it allowed the researcher—who also serves as a university supervisor—to investigate and improve virtual supervision practices from within. Action research, too, is grounded in several key assumptions, including the belief that those closest to practice are best positioned to study and improve it. That professional knowledge is best developed through cycles of reflection and action (Herr & Anderson, 2014). One central assumption of action research is that transformation and growth occur through critical reflection on practice within real-world settings. This reflective process enables educators to identify areas for improvement and implement changes that enhance

teaching and learning outcomes (Crawford, 2022). An advantage of action research is its immediate applicability; educators can apply findings in real-time, leading to meaningful, context-specific change (Crawford, 2022). However, a common critique is that action research may lack objectivity, as the researcher is deeply embedded in the environment being studied. This insider role necessitates careful documentation of decisions and continuous reflection to ensure integrity and credibility in the research process (Lindhult, 2019).

Action research offers several advantages, particularly for studies that aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice in education. It empowers educators to engage critically with their work, reflect on their assumptions, and adapt based on evidence and outcomes (Crawford, 2022). The methodology's iterative cycles enable responsive change, making it well-suited to dynamic environments such as teacher preparation programs (Crawford, 2022). Nonetheless, the dual role of researcher-practitioner can introduce bias or influence outcomes. To mitigate such risks, this study employed consistent reflexivity practices, including journaling, memo writing, and validation strategies, enhancing transparency and rigor. The action research framework facilitated continuous improvement in the supervision process while respecting the voices and lived experiences of the nontraditional student teachers involved.

Research Context

Research Setting

As mentioned in the study's literature review, Illinois is currently experiencing a severe shortage of early childhood educators, particularly in rural and underserved areas, prompting the development of innovative training models to expand access and diversify the teaching workforce (Cunningham, 2021; ISBE, 2023; Liu et al., 2018). The study took place within an alternative certification program at a university in Illinois, with a specific focus on early

childhood education. This context is particularly relevant due to the state's critical shortage of early childhood educators, necessitating innovative educational practices. Virtual supervision emerges as a flexible and inclusive strategy that addresses the diverse needs and logistical constraints of students and teachers, including time limitations, employment obligations, and geographical distance—factors that are especially salient for nontraditional learners (Cunningham, 2021; Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; Remenick, 2019). The setting enabled the exploration of virtual supervision practices, particularly their potential to support nontraditional students balancing multiple responsibilities. Additionally, due to geographical distances and scheduling constraints, all participant interviews were conducted remotely via the Zoom videoconference platform, ensuring convenience, accessibility, and consistent data collection across all study phases. This unique context enriches the research, offering insights directly applicable to similar educational programs facing comparable challenges.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Participants were selected using purposeful sampling, a method designed to identify individuals who could provide comprehensive, detailed accounts relevant to the study's focus. Purposeful sampling enables researchers to select participants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives, thereby ensuring the collection of meaningful data (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). As outlined in the CUHSR application, the inclusion criteria required participants to be nontraditional student teachers currently enrolled in an alternative certification program and supervised virtually during their clinical placements. Qualifying characteristics included being over the age of 22, balancing employment or caregiving responsibilities, and following a non-linear path to teacher certification (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). Individuals not

meeting these criteria, such as traditional full-time students without external obligations or those not completing virtual supervision, were excluded from the study.

Participants were identified through collaboration with university faculty who had direct knowledge of eligible students and their placements. Following the initial recommendations, a recruitment email was sent to potential participants, outlining the study's purpose, eligibility criteria, and participation expectations **(**see Appendix A**)**. Interested individuals confirmed eligibility and provided informed consent before beginning the interview process (see Appendix B**)**. Three participants were ultimately selected to represent a range of backgrounds and experiences aligned with the study's goals. Case study methodology supports the use of small, information-rich samples to enable deep exploration of contextual experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018).

Participants

The participants in the study included three nontraditional student teachers placed in different Illinois elementary schools during their final student teaching semester. Though enrolled in the same alternative certification program, none of the participants were placed at the same school. Each participant brought distinct personal, professional, and educational experiences to the study. Their ages spanned across three adult life stages—early adulthood, midlife, and late adulthood—enabling the study to explore how generational differences, caregiving responsibilities, and professional identities shaped their perceptions of virtual supervision. All three participants were navigating multiple roles, including full-time or part-time employment, caregiving, and coursework, which significantly influenced their engagement with virtual supervision processes.

This diversity was a strength of the study, providing a nuanced understanding of how nontraditional student teachers experience virtual supervision. For example, one participant was a young working professional with no dependents, while another was balancing full-time employment with parenting responsibilities, and the third was reentering the field later in life while supporting an aging parent. These varied life circumstances also affected participants' comfort and preferences related to technology, supervisory feedback, and emotional support. With only three participants, the study allowed for in-depth engagement with each narrative, providing rich insights into how individual contexts influenced their experiences of student teaching.

This variation in participant context allowed for comparative insights regarding how nontraditional student teachers interpreted and navigated virtual feedback, instructional planning, and emotional resilience. The narratives reflected a range of experiences, including how participants adapted to technological tools, interpreted supervisory input, and juggled complex personal responsibilities while developing as educators. The generational span offered key perspectives on digital literacy, emotional regulation, and work-life balance in teacher preparation. Through these individual stories, the study identified recurring themes about virtual supervision's potential to be both empowering and isolating, depending on individual life context. These findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of virtual supervision for nontraditional teacher candidates.

See Table 1, which summarizes key demographic and contextual characteristics of the three nontraditional student teachers who participated in this study. This table includes participant pseudonyms, age ranges, employment status, prior degrees, caregiving responsibilities, preferred feedback styles, life stage descriptions, and placement locations.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Demographics and Contextual Characteristics

Name (Alias)	Age	Job Status	Prior Degree	Caregiving Duties	Preferred Feedback Style	Stage In Life	Placement Location
Molly	22	Part-time	Associate's in ECE	None	Written	Working professional	Illinois elementary school A
Linda	49	Full-time	Associate's in ECE	Two daughters (17, 22)	Verbal/Zoom	Career changer	Illinois elementary school B
Diane	61	Full-time	Bachelor's in Social Work	Elder parent and adult children	Verbal/Emotional support	Returning to workforce late	Illinois elementary school C

Note. Pseudonyms are used to protect participant confidentiality. Placement locations indicate general school assignments within Illinois and are not specific to individual schools.

Researcher Positionality

My positionality significantly shaped both the research process and the interpretations, as I occupied dual roles: that of a university professor and virtual supervisor of the student teachers in this study. These overlapping positions provided insider access and professional insight into virtual supervision, enabling a nuanced and empathetic understanding of participant experiences. However, these roles also introduced potential biases and the risk of a power imbalance, as participants may have perceived me as an authority figure rather than a neutral researcher. To address these concerns, I engaged in reflexivity, a process of ongoing self-examination that involves critically reflecting on one's positionality, assumptions, and influence throughout the research process (Berger, 2015). I maintained a reflexive journal to document my thoughts, decisions, and emotional responses—for instance, noting moments when I felt overly sympathetic to a participant's struggle or when my own supervisory practices seemed mirrored in their critiques.

These written reflections helped me identify and question my reactions, enabling me to bracket personal biases and prioritize participants' authentic voices over my interpretations. Additionally, I used memo writing after interviews to critically evaluate whether my feedback or follow-up questions may have unintentionally guided responses. Practicing reflexivity in this way helped mitigate the influence of my authority and ensured a more balanced, participant-centered analysis. By being transparent about my dual roles and actively managing potential biases, the study's trustworthiness and credibility were enhanced. Ultimately, reflexivity served as a safeguard against interpretive bias, helping to preserve the integrity of the findings.

Research Methods

Data Collection

Semi-structured in-depth interviews constituted the sole data collection method **(**see Appendix C for the full interview protocol), allowing for a detailed exploration of participants' lived experiences. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection technique that combines predetermined questions with the flexibility to explore emergent themes, enabling researchers to delve deeper into participants' perspectives while maintaining alignment with the study's core topics (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). This method provided the flexibility to accommodate individual narratives while maintaining consistency and focus on central research areas such as technological proficiency, feedback quality, professional growth, and reflective teaching practices (Tingabngab & Binayao, 2023). Semi-structured protocols facilitated open-ended dialogue, encouraging participants to elaborate on their responses, provide contextually rich examples, and discuss experiences they deemed significant to their virtual supervision journey. Furthermore, the conversational nature of the interviews promoted a sense

of comfort and rapport, enabling participants to share their challenges, frustrations, successes, and recommendations candidly.

Each participant was interviewed four times during the semester: at the beginning, middle, end, and after the student teaching placement. Conducting interviews at strategically timed intervals—initial engagement, mid-semester, completion, and post-supervision—enabled comprehensive tracking of participants' evolving experiences and perceptions throughout their student teaching placements. Initial interviews captured baseline expectations, initial reactions, and early challenges faced by participants. In contrast, mid-semester interviews provided critical insights into ongoing adjustments, coping strategies, and the emergence of professional identities. Completion-phase interviews allowed participants to reflect holistically on their overall experience, emphasizing the developmental trajectory and capturing the nuances of growth throughout supervision. Finally, post-supervision interviews, conducted approximately two weeks after the placements concluded, allowed participants to reflect retrospectively, offering thoughtful consideration of their overall experiences, long-term professional impacts, and suggestions for improving virtual supervision practices.

All interviews were digitally recorded using Zoom's capabilities, ensuring high-quality audio and video data for subsequent transcription and analysis. Recordings were securely stored and transcribed verbatim, capturing not only spoken words but also notable pauses, hesitations, and emotional nuances that enriched the interpretative depth of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). Following transcription, interviews underwent member-checking processes, in which participants reviewed transcripts to verify accuracy, clarify intentions, and add further detail as necessary. This rigorous and participatory approach to data collection helped ensure that the

narrative data collected was detailed, accurate, and authentically reflective of participants' actual experiences, thereby significantly enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

Procedures

The interview process was systematically structured to cover four critical phases of participant experiences, from initial expectations to final reflections. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives. Transcriptions were shared with participants shortly after each interview for member checking, offering an opportunity to clarify or correct statements, thereby enhancing data accuracy and integrity. In addition to the audio recordings and transcripts, researcher notes were made during each interview to document contextual observations, emotional tone, and initial reflections on emerging themes. These notes were typed immediately after the interview sessions. They were included as part of the data collection record, alongside the transcribed interviews, to contribute to a comprehensive and multilayered dataset.

Prior to the first interview, participants received a full explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits, ensuring transparency and informed participation. Written consent was obtained, and participants were informed of their rights, including the option to participate voluntarily, confidentiality, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. To preserve anonymity, pseudonyms were used in all transcripts, notes, and reports, and no identifiable information about schools or individuals was recorded. Ethical procedures were followed, adhering to institutional review board (IRB) protocols and broader research ethics standards, which ensured participant dignity, safety, and trust. For example, participants were allowed to review their interview transcripts before final

analysis, reinforcing the study's ethical commitment to shared ownership of their narratives and to safeguarding the credibility of the research.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process for this study is grounded in a qualitative approach, utilizing thematic analysis, as outlined in Creswell's (2021) guidelines. Initially, data from semi-structured, in-depth interviews will undergo multiple readings to achieve immersion in the participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Open coding will be employed during this initial phase, capturing significant statements directly relevant to virtual supervision experiences (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). The primary goal at this stage is to identify recurrent words, phrases, and ideas that reflect the essence of participants' perspectives. Codes will be systematically documented to maintain clarity and organization throughout subsequent analytical steps.

Following open coding, axial coding will explore connections and relationships among initial codes, forming more coherent thematic categories (Saldaña, 2021). This progressive process involves examining the coded data for emerging patterns related to technological challenges, feedback effectiveness, professional growth, and work-life balance (Stake, 2013). Such analytical rigor ensures a nuanced understanding of the participants' evolving experiences during virtual supervision. During this stage, visual mapping techniques such as thematic matrices and concept maps will be applied to clarify relationships among themes (Bazeley, 2021). The meticulous documentation and organization inherent in axial coding serve to validate emerging insights.

Finally, the analytical process culminated in a thematic synthesis, combining codes and categories into comprehensive themes that narratively depict the collective experiences of

participants (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Representative quotations were carefully selected and presented verbatim to support thematic interpretations, grounding the findings in participants' authentic voices (Bazeley, 2021). Throughout the analysis, I maintained reflective memos—a practice aligned with my earlier use of journaling and critical reflection during data collection. While journaling focused more broadly on documenting my positionality, reactions, and experiences throughout the research process, the reflective memos served as analytic tools specifically connected to coding and theme development. These memos enabled ongoing reflexivity by helping me recognize when personal perspectives or assumptions might influence data interpretation, thus ensuring transparency and minimizing researcher bias (Miles et al., 2020). This integrated approach to reflexivity and analysis strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, offering a robust and nuanced understanding of nontraditional student teachers' experiences with virtual supervision.

Strategies/Procedures

Several validation strategies will enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative data analysis in this study, beginning with member checking as a primary method (Creswell, 2021). Transcribed interviews and preliminary thematic analyses will be shared with participants, providing opportunities for verifying accuracy, clarifying interpretations, and enhancing the authenticity of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell, Norris et al., 2017). By actively involving participants in validation, this approach mitigates researcher bias and ensures alignment between the researcher's interpretations and participants' perspectives. Such

engagement with participants is essential in qualitative research to reinforce the validity of emerging themes and narratives.

In addition to member checking, data triangulation through multiple interviews conducted at different intervals (initial, mid-semester, final, and post-supervision) will significantly enhance internal validity (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). Gathering data across these distinct periods provides comparative insights into the participants' experiences, allowing the researcher to identify consistencies, contradictions, and changes in perceptions over time. Triangulation will also assist in cross-verifying themes, improving confidence in the reliability of findings (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2018). Such methodological triangulation adds depth to the analysis, effectively illuminating the complexities of the phenomena under study.

Timeline

This study's timeline is systematically structured to facilitate the practical completion of research activities. Initially, participant recruitment, informed consent acquisition, and scheduling of initial interviews will occur within the first two weeks of the academic semester, aligning closely with the commencement of student teaching placements. Conducting initial interviews within the third week ensures capturing early expectations, challenges, and participant perceptions of virtual supervision (Stake, 2013). Adequate time between interviews will allow for careful transcription, analysis, and preliminary coding, ensuring thorough data processing and adequate preparation for subsequent interview rounds.

Mid-semester interviews will be scheduled approximately eight weeks into the placement, strategically timed to document evolving experiences, adaptations, and emerging perceptions among participants. The third series of interviews will be conducted around week fifteen, closely coinciding with placement completion, capturing comprehensive reflective

insights into participants' experiences across the entire supervision period. Finally, post-supervision interviews will occur two weeks after placement completion, providing retrospective reflections critical for evaluating longitudinal changes (Miles et al., 2020). Maintaining consistent intervals between these interviews ensures a balanced approach to data collection, facilitating depth and coherence in participant narratives.

Data analysis will continue throughout the interview phases, extending approximately four weeks beyond the final interviews. Writing and synthesizing findings, including final thematic interpretations and scholarly discussions, will conclude in the subsequent two-week period. This structured yet flexible timeline accommodates potential scheduling conflicts or unexpected events, allowing for comprehensive data collection and rigorous analysis without compromising methodological quality (Yin, 2018). Clearly defining this timeline supports organized research progression, enhancing overall research effectiveness and coherence.

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the methodological approach and specific research methods employed in this qualitative action research study. Utilizing a case study design and an action research framework, the chapter outlined the processes involved. This chapter outlined the qualitative case study methodology and action research framework used to explore nontraditional student teachers’ experiences with virtual supervision. It described the participant selection process, data collection through semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis procedures, all while addressing ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity. Chapter 4 will present the

study's key findings, highlighting emergent themes supported by direct participant quotations to illustrate their lived experiences.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from qualitative interviews with nontraditional student teachers who were supervised virtually during their student-teaching placements. The purpose of this chapter is descriptive: to present the themes that emerged from the data and illustrate them with representative evidence from participants. Six interrelated themes organized the findings—flexibility, feedback, technology use and digital adaptation, reflective practice, supportive relationships, and equity and access. Each theme is presented with brief explanatory text and illustrative quotations to ensure the findings remain grounded in participants' words and contexts. Interpretation of these findings, integrated answers to the guiding research question, and resulting implications for practice appear in Chapter 5.

The analysis of interview data revealed six interrelated themes that shaped the virtual supervision experiences of nontraditional student teachers: (1) flexibility, (2) feedback, (3) technology use and digital adaptation, (4) reflective practice, (5) supportive relationships, and (6) equity and access. While each theme captures a distinct aspect of the participants' journeys, they are deeply interconnected and collectively illustrate how virtual supervision both accommodated and empowered adult learners with complex personal and professional responsibilities. The following sections explore each theme in greater detail, using participant narratives and supporting literature to highlight how these elements influenced their growth, persistence, and sense of professional identity within the teacher preparation program.

Theme 1: Flexibility

Flexibility emerged as a foundational theme for nontraditional student teachers navigating virtual supervision, underscoring its necessity rather than mere convenience. Across

all experiences, flexibility was consistently described as a lifeline that enabled the balance of work, family, and academic responsibilities. Linda described how virtual supervision allowed her to attend classes without leaving home after a long day of work. Molly emphasized that the program helped her maintain her job and personal life without compromise. Patty shared that she would not have been able to complete her degree without the flexibility of the virtual format. These insights are summarized in Table 2*,* which presents representative quotes from each participant related to the theme of flexibility.

Table 2

Participant Quotes Reflecting Theme of Flexibility

Theme	Linda	Molly	Patty
Flexibility	Virtual supervision gave me balance between my job and home life. I could attend meetings after work without commuting.	I haven't missed anything—family, work, or fun—because of this program. It allows me to do things traditional students can't.	Without the virtual option, I would've had to close my preschool. Flexibility helped me overcome life's obstacles and stay on track.

Note. Quotes illustrate how flexibility supported nontraditional student teachers' ability to balance personal, professional, and academic responsibilities.

Molly similarly highlighted how virtual supervision enabled her to integrate classroom learning directly into her professional role without sacrificing her personal responsibilities and activities. She explained, "I absolutely love the flexibility this program has offered. I have not missed out on anything—family-related, work-related, or fun-related—because of this program. This online program has allowed me to do many things that a traditional full-time student wouldn't normally be able to do." Molly's reflection underscores the importance of flexibility for

working professionals pursuing teacher licensure, noting that her ability to learn and apply instructional strategies in real time provided a richer, more relevant educational experience than she perceived traditional student teaching could offer.

Patty, who owns and operates a preschool while balancing roles as a grandmother and caregiver, described virtual supervision as the only viable pathway to completing her degree without jeopardizing her livelihood or family obligations. She shared, “Without having it virtual, this couldn’t happen. Without the scholarship and the flexibility of this format, I would have had to close my preschool, which wasn’t feasible. The flexibility in completing assignments has been phenomenal, and it allowed me to navigate life’s unexpected obstacles and still achieve my educational goals.” Patty’s narrative highlights the broader implications of virtual supervision, particularly its capacity to remove geographic, financial, and personal barriers that frequently hinder nontraditional students’ access to higher education and professional growth.

Theme 2: Feedback

Feedback emerged as a critical theme of the virtual supervision experience, with all participants emphasizing its significant impact on their instructional growth and confidence. The digital format allowed feedback to be delivered effectively through written comments, video reflections, and individual virtual meetings, offering participants ample time to meaningfully absorb and apply suggestions. Linda emphasized that written feedback played a central role in her experience with virtual supervision. She consistently referred to the feedback as clear, thorough, and easy to revisit, which helped her understand and apply instructional strategies. Linda stated, *“Having written feedback was extremely helpful because I could always go back to reread it. It allowed me to reflect more deeply and clearly understand how to improve specific teaching strategies without feeling overwhelmed or rushed.”* This ability to return to written

notes at her convenience gave her a sense of structure in her learning process and allowed her to take time to think through her responses. Linda's experiences, as shown in Table 3, reflect how written comments allowed her to absorb feedback in a way that felt manageable and supportive of her growth. She appreciated that feedback was tied directly to her teaching practice and that it was available in a format that matched her learning needs.

Molly also described feedback as an essential part of her growth during virtual supervision, especially when it was directly connected to her recorded teaching moments. She shared, *"Because my supervisor's feedback directly referenced specific recorded moments, it gave me space and time to reflect and truly understand what changes were needed and why."* The feedback she received helped her clearly see the link between her teaching decisions and student outcomes. Molly expressed that she preferred having time to return to the feedback as needed: *"I liked being able to look back at examples or feedback whenever I needed to. This was especially important since my supervisor's observations directly referenced specific moments from my recorded lessons, making the feedback immediately relevant and clear."* These quotes, as presented in Table 3, show how having consistent, targeted feedback supported her ability to make informed instructional changes. The structure of receiving and reviewing feedback asynchronously gave her time to process the information fully and apply it meaningfully in her teaching context.

Patty shared that receiving feedback in a virtual environment helped her manage the emotional aspects of learning and teaching. She described her supervisor's approach as encouraging and noted that the tone of feedback made a difference in how she received and responded to it. *"My supervisor's tone was always supportive, never critical or intimidating. Knowing that I could review feedback privately at my own pace really helped me manage my*

anxieties," she explained. In her experience, feedback that was delivered through written comments, video annotations, and one-on-one virtual meetings gave her space to reflect without pressure. She valued the pacing and delivery of feedback, stating that it allowed her to feel more in control of her professional growth. Table 3 illustrates Patty's reflections, emphasizing the emotional reassurance she received from being able to engage with feedback on her own terms. For Patty, the feedback process supported her development by creating a steady and positive rhythm of communication with her supervisor.

Table 3

Participant Quotes Reflecting Theme of Feedback

Theme	Linda	Molly	Patty
Feedback	Written feedback was helpful because I could reread it and reflect without feeling rushed. It helped me clearly understand how to improve.	I liked being able to revisit feedback tied to specific lesson moments. It gave me time to reflect and understand what changes were needed.	My supervisor's tone was supportive. Reviewing feedback privately at my own pace helped manage anxiety and build confidence over time.

Note. Quotes highlight how multimodal and asynchronous feedback supported the confidence and instructional development of nontraditional student teachers.

Theme 3: Technology Use and Digital Adaptation

All three participants described significant growth in technological proficiency and confidence with digital tools during their virtual supervision experience. They began the program with varying levels of comfort and gradually developed skills such as navigating online platforms like Zoom and Canvas, recording and uploading instructional videos, and

troubleshooting technical issues. Linda initially found the digital tools overwhelming and anxiety-provoking, recalling, “In the beginning, technology was overwhelming—I worried constantly about uploading lessons correctly or using Zoom and Canvas.” Patty also described early struggles as particularly challenging, explaining, “At first, I faced a lot of frustration and tears—I really struggled with the technology.” Molly entered the program with some prior experience but still identified areas where her skills improved over time, particularly with consistent and structured use of the required tools.

Over time, participants reported that clear instructions, encouragement, and repeated practice helped them transition from uncertainty to confidence. Linda emphasized the value of detailed guidance from her supervisor, noting, “My supervisor provided clear steps and patient support, and gradually, I became more confident. Eventually, these tasks felt routine, and I could see exactly how this experience would help shape my own future teaching.” Patty shared that she received essential support from her adult son, who provided tutorials and helped her troubleshoot issues in the early stages. She explained, “My son helped me navigate some of those early obstacles, showing me tutorials and helping me troubleshoot issues. Eventually, through repeated practice, I felt comfortable and capable.” These steady improvements helped participants feel more prepared to handle the technical aspects of their teaching.

Molly, who had some prior exposure to online learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, also experienced growth in her technology skills. She explained, “Although I was somewhat familiar with online tools, the virtual supervision experience significantly enhanced my comfort level. Platforms like Canvas became intuitive after regular use, and video tutorials provided additional clarity.” She described how frequent interaction with these tools helped her work more efficiently and complete tasks with greater ease. Over time, she became more

confident in her ability to integrate technology into her teaching responsibilities. Her experience reflected a shift from occasional use of technology to relying on it as an integral part of her instructional practice.

As shown in Table 4, participants' experiences illustrate a clear progression from initial uncertainty to fluency with digital tools. They described a combination of resources and supports that helped them build their skills, including supervisor guidance, peer assistance, and family support. Each participant identified repeated practice as an important factor in becoming comfortable with platforms like Zoom and Canvas. The ability to adapt to new platforms and integrate technology into daily teaching became a significant outcome of the virtual supervision experience. By the end of the program, participants viewed their increased technological proficiency as a key component of their professional growth.

Table 4

Participant Quotes Reflecting Theme of Technology Use and Digital Adaptation

Theme	Linda	Molly	Patty
Technology Use and Digital Adaptation	In the beginning, I was overwhelmed by uploading lessons and using Zoom. With my supervisor's support, I became confident and now see how this will help me teach.	Even though I had some experience, this program made Canvas and other tools intuitive. It improved my digital fluency for modern classrooms.	I cried at first from tech frustration, but my son helped me with tutorials. Repeated use and support made me feel capable and confident.

Note. Quotes demonstrate participants' transition from technological anxiety to digital fluency through structured support and practice

Theme 4: Reflective Practice

Reflective practice emerged as a central theme across all participants' experiences, with virtual supervision providing opportunities for deeper self-awareness and instructional growth. The use of recorded teaching videos allowed participants to pause, revisit, and carefully examine their teaching. Linda described this process as transformative, stating, "Watching our recordings can deepen our understanding of our strengths and areas where we need to grow as an educator. I noticed specific teaching strategies I missed during live instruction, helping me pinpoint exactly what worked and what needed improvement." She explained that having these recordings to review gave her insight she would not have gained during live teaching alone.

Molly also emphasized how the virtual supervision model enhanced her ability to reflect by giving her time to process feedback before responding. She shared, "Rather than having to immediately react, I could pause and truly consider the feedback and my emotional response." She explained that this approach allowed her to make intentional changes to her instruction and better connect her classroom practice with her coursework. Having the ability to review lessons and feedback at her own pace made her reflection more focused and meaningful. She found that this process deepened her understanding of her own teaching style and effectiveness.

Patty reflected on how virtual supervision allowed for a slower, more deliberate pacing of feedback and reflection compared to her past experiences. She said, "Having time to emotionally and cognitively process my lessons before discussing feedback was a game changer." She noted that this extra time provided clarity and allowed her to think more deeply about her teaching decisions and intentions. Patty appreciated that the reflective opportunities in the virtual model gave her a chance to approach her professional growth more thoughtfully. She felt this structure supported her in making lasting changes to her instructional practice.

As summarized in Table 5, all three participants described how virtual supervision supported their reflective teaching practice. They noted that recorded lessons, asynchronous feedback, and flexible time for processing each played a role in fostering more meaningful reflection. Linda focused on identifying specific strengths and areas for improvement through video review. Molly valued the ability to pause and consider her emotional and instructional responses before acting on feedback. Patty highlighted how time for reflection created a more intentional and growth-oriented teaching process.

Table 5

Reflective Practice and Virtual Supervision

Theme	Linda	Molly	Patty
Reflective Practice	Watching our recordings can deepen our understanding of our strengths and areas where we need to grow as an educator.	Rather than having to immediately react, I could pause and truly consider the feedback and my emotional response.	Having time to emotionally and cognitively process my lessons before discussing feedback was a game changer.

Note. This table summarizes participants' reflections on how virtual supervision supported their reflective teaching practice.

Theme 5: Supportive Relationships

Participants consistently emphasized that strong relationships with university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and peers were central to their success within the virtual supervision model. These relationships provided both emotional support and collaborative communication, maintained and strengthened through digital tools. Linda characterized her professors as "100% available," explaining, "They truly understood my personal challenges. Knowing they were there

for me helped immensely during tough moments. I never felt alone or unsupported." Patty described how one-on-one virtual meetings provided emotional grounding and reassurance, stating, "Zoom meetings weren't just practical—they provided essential emotional support, making me feel comfortable and understood when navigating difficult times." Molly noted that the trust she built with her supervisor created a safe space for open dialogue, sharing, "The trust I built through regular, positive interactions with my supervisor allowed me to talk about anything without fear of judgment. It felt like genuine mentorship rather than mere evaluation."

As summarized in Table 6, participants identified trust, open communication, and availability as important in fostering supportive relationships. Supervisors were described as approachable and responsive, offering encouragement alongside instructional guidance. Molly highlighted that the consistent, positive interactions with her supervisor helped her feel comfortable discussing challenges. Patty valued the emotional reassurance she received during virtual meetings, which helped her navigate difficult periods in her placement. Linda emphasized that knowing her professors understood her personal circumstances was critical in maintaining her persistence and confidence.

Supportive relationships also extended to peer collaboration. Participants described using digital platforms such as GroupMe, Zoom, and email to communicate regularly and meaningfully. Molly shared, "I appreciated being able to ask questions, clarify expectations, or exchange encouragement almost any time of day." Patty noted that Zoom meetings with peers allowed for deeper, more meaningful dialogue without typical time constraints. Linda explained that digital platforms helped her stay organized and maintain consistent peer connections while balancing multiple responsibilities. These tools made peer support accessible and helped participants feel connected despite physical distance.

Table 6

Supportive Relationships and Virtual Supervision

Theme	Linda	Molly	Patty
Supportive Relationships	They truly understood my personal challenges. Knowing they were there for me helped immensely during tough moments. I never felt alone or unsupported.	The trust I built through regular, positive interactions with my supervisor allowed me to talk about anything without fear of judgment. It felt like genuine mentorship rather than mere evaluation.	Zoom meetings weren't just practical—they provided essential emotional support, making me feel comfortable and understood when navigating difficult times.

Note. This table summarizes participants' descriptions of how supportive relationships were maintained and strengthened through virtual supervision.

Theme 6: Equity and Access

Participants described virtual supervision as essential for making teacher preparation possible while managing complex personal and professional responsibilities. All three participants identified barriers such as financial constraints, geographic distance, and caregiving duties that would have made traditional, in-person placements nearly impossible to complete. They explained that flexible scheduling, the ability to remain in their communities, and reduced costs were key factors in enabling them to persist in their programs. Their experiences, summarized in Table 7, highlight the significant role of virtual supervision in removing obstacles that could have prevented program completion. Each participant's account reflects how the format supported their ability to balance multiple commitments while progressing toward licensure.

Linda explained that virtual supervision allowed her to maintain full-time employment and care for her children while completing her degree. She stated, "Being able to work full-time while raising my daughters and completing my education was incredibly empowering and validating. Without this flexibility, my dreams of becoming a licensed teacher would have remained unreachable." She described how the program's structure enabled her to manage daily responsibilities without sacrificing her educational goals. The option to work and study concurrently was a deciding factor in her ability to stay enrolled. As shown in Table 7, Linda viewed the virtual format as a critical factor in achieving her goal of becoming a licensed teacher.

Patty described virtual supervision as the only realistic path to licensure for her circumstances. She shared, "Continuing to run my preschool was essential not only for my financial stability but also for the families relying on me. Without the virtual option, I simply could not have completed my degree." Patty explained that closing her preschool would have had both personal and professional consequences, making an in-person program unfeasible. The flexibility of virtual supervision allowed her to complete her assignments while maintaining her business operations. Table 7 captures her perspective that without this model, completing the program would not have been possible.

Molly emphasized that the geographic flexibility of virtual supervision allowed her to stay in her community, keep her job, and maintain stability in her personal life. She explained, "Being able to remain in my community meant I didn't have to relocate or give up my job. This allowed me to stay focused and grounded, significantly reducing stress and disruption to my personal and professional life." She shared that avoiding relocation preserved her emotional well-being while keeping her financially stable. The structure of the program allowed her to

integrate her coursework into her daily routine without significant disruption. As reflected in Table 7, Molly's experience demonstrates how geographic independence supported her persistence in the program.

Table 7

Equity and Access in Virtual Supervision

Theme	Linda	Molly	Patty
Equity and Access	Being able to work full-time while raising my daughters and completing my education was incredibly empowering and validating.	Being able to remain in my community meant I didn't have to relocate or give up my job. This allowed me to stay focused and grounded…	Continuing to run my preschool was essential… Without the virtual option, I simply could not have completed my degree.

*Note***.** Summary of participant perspectives on how virtual supervision improved access to teacher preparation.

To further synthesize the qualitative findings, Table 8 presents a thematic conceptual matrix that visually aligns the six themes that emerged—flexibility, feedback, technology use and adaptation, reflective practice, supportive relationships, and equity and access—across the three participants. This matrix highlights the consistency and variation in participant experiences, offering a comparative view of how each theme manifested in the lived experiences of Linda, Molly, and Patty. By organizing participant quotations under each theme, the table provides a concise yet meaningful summary of the chapter's core findings, reinforcing the significance of virtual supervision in addressing the complex needs of nontraditional student teachers. This visual representation enhances the narrative analysis by illustrating the shared and unique ways participants engaged with and benefited from the virtual model.

Table 8

Thematic Conceptual Matrix of Virtual Supervision Experiences

Theme	Linda	Molly	Patty
Flexibility	"The flexibility… has impacted me positively."	"I absolutely love the flexibility…"	"Without virtual, this couldn't have happened."
Feedback	"Feedback… just like being in person."	"I like to be reassured… reading feedback repeatedly."	"Delay in feedback, but it allows reflection."
Tech Issues	"Technology is not my best friend… but support was huge."	"I have learned to troubleshoot issues…"	"Through tears and frustration… I can do this."
Reflection	"Recording allows us to reflect on our practice."	"Being able to apply my own experiences…"	"Virtual supervision gave time to reflect on my own."
Support	"Professors are 100% available… always understanding."	"I am comfortable discussing anything with her."	"One-on-one Zoom calls felt supportive."
Equity/ Access	"I could not have done this in person… flexibility made it all possible."	"This program has helped me realize how flexible life is…"	"Without technology… it wouldn't have happened."

Note. This matrix summarizes key participant quotes across the six identified themes. It illustrates how each participant's experiences aligned with the broader conceptual categories explored in this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents six interrelated findings that describe how nontraditional candidates experienced virtual supervision during student teaching, including flexibility, feedback, technology use and digital adaptation, reflective practice, supportive relationships, and equity and access. Together, these themes depict a model that reduced participation barriers while maintaining

clear expectations and structured coaching. The emphasis here was on what participants reported and how those reports clustered into coherent patterns across cases. In Chapter 5, I interpret these findings in light of relevant literature and frameworks, answer the guiding research question, and outline implications for programs, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers, followed by study limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of nontraditional student teachers supervised virtually during their student-teaching placements. The study was guided by the central question: What were the experiences of nontraditional student teachers supervised virtually during their student-teaching placements? Because the focus was on meaning and lived experience, a qualitative case study was appropriate for developing clear, context-rich accounts of practice and growth (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2018). This approach also linked individual accounts to program design choices that shaped daily supervision and longer-term development, while maintaining close attention to each participant's context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2018). Participants were treated as knowledgeable informants, and their descriptions of supervision routines, technology use, and relationships served as primary evidence for understanding what supports adult learners who balance work, caregiving, and coursework.

This chapter concludes the study and follows the order of the section headings. I begin with answers to the study's research question, synthesizing cross-participant patterns and the interconnections among the six themes. I then present implications for practice for teacher-education programs, university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and adult candidates. Next, I outline the study's limitations to guide appropriate interpretation and transferability. I follow with suggestions for future research that can test and extend these findings. I conclude with a summary and reflection on the study's contributions to scholarship and practice.

Analysis and Discussion

This section interprets the study's findings, considering relevant literature, guiding theories, and the broader context of preparing nontraditional teacher candidates. It first lists the six themes—flexibility, feedback, technology use and digital adaptation, reflective practice,

supportive relationships, and equity and access—and then analyzes each to show where participants' experiences align with, challenge, or extend existing research. Particular attention is given to what these patterns suggest for virtual supervision models. By synthesizing insights from the data with established research, the section explains how and why the results matter. It concludes by identifying implications for policy and practice in teacher education.

Flexibility

The findings demonstrate that flexibility was not merely a beneficial feature of virtual supervision but a necessity for nontraditional student teachers managing multiple life roles. Participants' ability to balance work, family, and academic responsibilities reflects Knowles' (1984) principles of andragogy, which emphasize the need for self-directed, life-integrated learning experiences for adult learners. This aligns with Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) and Zeichner and Bier (2015)**,** who advocate for alternative, equity-informed pathways in teacher preparation that address the diverse needs of students. CAST's (2018) Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles further support this finding by emphasizing multiple means of engagement to accommodate learner variability. By integrating flexibility in scheduling, location, and pacing, the virtual supervision model met essential conditions for adult learner success while enhancing access for those who might otherwise be excluded from traditional programs.

Feedback

Feedback in the virtual supervision model was multimodal, timely, and individualized, reflecting the best practices identified by Hattie and Timperley (2007), who stress that effective feedback should be specific, formative, and actionable. Participants valued the ability to revisit written and recorded comments, which aligns with Acheson and Gall's (2002) emphasis on

reflective practice as an essential component of teacher growth. The asynchronous nature of much of the feedback allowed participants to process information without the immediate pressure of in-person evaluation, supporting deeper engagement with suggestions for improvement. These results suggest that virtual supervision can maintain — and in some cases enhance — the quality of feedback through intentional use of digital tools, fostering both professional growth and confidence in emerging teachers.

Technology Use

Participants' progression from initial technological anxiety to confident and fluent digital tool use mirrors the developmental trajectory described in Mishra and Koehler's (2006) Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. Early challenges with platforms such as Zoom and Canvas were mitigated through clear instructions, patient guidance, and repeated practice, reinforcing Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich's (2010) assertion that confidence is as critical as access in technology integration. The use of recorded lessons and video conferencing also aligns with Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who emphasize embedding digital tools within clinical practice to prepare teachers for modern classrooms. In this way, virtual supervision functioned not only as a delivery format but as a means of building essential technological competencies for future teaching.

Reflective Practices

The data revealed that reflective practice was embedded in the structure of virtual supervision, with participants using recorded lessons, written feedback, and supervisor prompts to analyze and refine their teaching strategies. This iterative process reflects Schön's (1983) concept of the "reflective practitioner" and aligns with Loughran's (2002) argument that structured opportunities for reflection are essential for developing professional judgment. By

engaging in both self-reflection and guided reflection, participants demonstrated the kind of metacognitive awareness that Zeichner and Liston (2014) identify as central to effective teacher preparation. The virtual format amplified this process by enabling participants to revisit recorded evidence of their practice, thereby supporting sustained, deliberate reflection over time.

Supportive Relationships

Supportive relationships with supervisors emerged as a critical factor in participants' persistence and professional growth. This aligns with the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013), which emphasize the importance of collaboration and mentorship in teacher development. Participants' accounts reflect the trust and open communication necessary for constructive supervision, consistent with Hudson's (2010) model of effective mentoring. The virtual format did not diminish these relationships; instead, it provided multiple avenues for connection, including video calls, written exchanges, and prompt feedback, reinforcing the idea that strong mentoring can transcend physical proximity when supported by intentional communication strategies.

Equity and Access

The findings highlight that virtual supervision served as a critical tool for promoting equity and access in teacher preparation, particularly for nontraditional candidates with caregiving responsibilities, financial constraints, and geographic barriers. This reflects Darling-Hammond's call for structural supports that go beyond academic content to address the lived realities of diverse learners. The model also aligns with Safford and Stinton's (2016) identification of transportation, childcare, and scheduling as primary barriers to persistence for adult learners. Garcia and Weiss (2019) further emphasize that expanding access to teacher preparation supports the development of a more diverse and culturally responsive workforce,

which in turn benefits student learning outcomes. In this study, virtual supervision directly addressed these barriers, enabling participants to remain in their communities, maintain employment, and progress toward licensure without sacrificing personal or professional responsibilities.

Answers to the Study's Research Question

This study aimed to answer the research question: What are the experiences of nontraditional student teachers supervised virtually during their student teaching placements? Analysis of interviews revealed six interconnected themes—flexibility, feedback, technology use and digital adaptation, reflective practice, supportive relationships, and equity and access—that collectively supported participants' ability to complete their placements while balancing personal and professional responsibilities. Flexibility, technology, and equity formed the foundation for meaningful feedback, reflection, and supportive relationships, creating a structure that addressed both logistical and instructional needs. Flexibility was essential, enabling participants to meet program requirements without sacrificing employment or family obligations, aligning with Knowles' (1984) and CAST's (2018) frameworks for adapting instruction to diverse learner needs. Feedback, delivered through written comments, video annotations, and virtual meetings, was valued for its timeliness, specificity, and accessibility, supporting deeper reflection and targeted instructional adjustments (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Participants also developed significant technological proficiency, moving from initial anxiety to confidence in using tools like Zoom and Canvas, reflecting the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) and the importance of building confidence alongside skill (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

Reflective practice was strengthened through recorded lessons and guided analysis, consistent with Schön's (1983) model of the reflective practitioner, allowing participants to

identify strengths, address areas for improvement, and refine their instructional decision-making over time. Supportive relationships with supervisors and mentors fostered trust, open communication, and a willingness to try new strategies, reinforcing persistence and motivation (Hudson, 2010). Equity and access were central, as the virtual format removed barriers related to geography, caregiving, and finances, enabling participants to remain in their communities and maintain stability while progressing toward licensure (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Safford & Stinton, 2016). Collectively, the findings indicate that virtual supervision offers a sustainable, equity-focused pathway into teaching for nontraditional candidates, addressing their logistical, instructional, and relational needs while preparing them for technology-rich classroom environments.

Flexibility, equity, and access serve as foundational conditions that enable the other elements to perform their roles, while technology use and digital adaptation facilitate the exchange of evidence and feedback between individuals. In that setup, feedback provides clear guidance, and reflection translates that guidance into minor adjustments in planning, teaching, and classroom management. Supportive relationships hold the cycle together by building trust and motivation, so candidates continue to take small next steps even when work and family pressures are high. Together, these factors help explain why participants reported less stress and a more focused instruction across the term. The six themes work best as one system with all parts active.

The themes also strengthen each other over time. When programs set regular times for observations and use simple tech steps, candidates can capture sound clips and get fast, specific feedback. That feedback, based on shared videos and notes, strengthens reflection and shows changes in the next lesson, which in turn builds trust between candidates and supervisors. As

candidates become more comfortable with the tools, they spend less time troubleshooting technology and more time analyzing student thinking, which enhances the evidence they present at each meeting. This creates a positive cycle in which access and flexibility open up learning opportunities, relationships maintain momentum, technology carries evidence, and feedback and reflection drive growth for nontraditional candidates. The most significant gains occur when programs implement changes across multiple aspects, including people, routines, and tools, rather than making changes to just one of these elements.

Implications for Practice

For teacher education programs, the primary implication is to design for flexibility by default rather than by exception. Programs should institutionalize observation windows, options for remote recording, and paced deliverables that reflect the rhythms of schools and families while preserving clarity about performance standards. Flexibility should be framed as a structural condition that enables candidates to meet high expectations rather than as an accommodation that lowers the bar for adult learners. Policies should include clear workflows for permission, storage, and confidentiality so that flexible observation and conferencing do not create confusion or risk. When flexibility is predictable and transparent, candidates and partners can plan reliably and direct attention to instruction and reflection instead of logistics (CAST, 2018).

Candidates benefit from step-by-step guides for recording, uploading, annotating, and conferencing that are reinforced through low-stress practice cycles and quick help channels. Programs can provide examples of annotated clips and model how to link feedback to time-stamped evidence so that comments are concrete and actionable (Picci & Calvani, 2012; Tripp & Rich, 2011). Aligning these routines with program assessments helps candidates see the connection between digital skills and valid evidence of growth in teaching. This approach

reframes technology as a tool for learning rather than an add-on and positions candidates to use technology purposefully in future classrooms, where pedagogy and content guide tool choice and use (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). When candidates regularly practice annotation and receive evidence-based feedback, they begin to internalize what constitutes credible proof of instructional impact. Over time, these habits strengthen reflective practice and make performance expectations more transparent.

A second implication for programs is to treat technology onboarding and ongoing support as central curricular content, rather than secondary support. Clear, repeatable workflows reduce cognitive load, allowing attention to stay focused on the instruction rather than troubleshooting. Providing exemplars of effective clips at different proficiency levels helps candidates calibrate what "good" looks like (Tripp & Rich, 2011). Tying these routines to assessment rubrics ensures that technical processes serve instructional goals. Embedding just-in-time supports, such as checklists, short screencasts, and troubleshooting FAQs, helps control these practices and increase consistency across placements (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015; Redmond et al., 2018).

For University Supervisors

For university supervisors, the implication is to maintain a strong sense of presence through scheduled touchpoints and consistent follow-through. Presence is communicated through reliability and responsiveness, rather than physical proximity, which means clarity is crucial in virtual models. Short, focused conferences that center on a few key clips can be more effective than lengthy general discussions that rely on memory alone (Gregory et al., 2017). Combining concise written notes with brief video conversations supports both precision and relationship-building, allowing candidates to revisit guidance when planning. When presence is intentional

and routine, candidates surface difficulties earlier, which improves support, accountability, and momentum for growth over the term (Redmond et al., 2018).

For Cooperating Teachers and School Partners

For cooperating teachers and school partners, the implication is to work together to manage logistics that make virtual supervision smooth and respectful of classroom life. Partners can jointly select lessons that represent authentic practice, schedule recordings and conferencing with minimal disruption, and efficiently secure permissions with clear communication to families and administrators. Schools can support candidates by offering reliable internet access and quiet spaces for debriefs when needed, so that post-observation conversations can occur while the memory is still fresh. Co-planning the timing of feedback conversations to ensure artifacts are accessible enhances the value of each supervision cycle. These acts of partnership ensure that supervision enhances rather than interrupts teaching and learning and position cooperating teachers as active co-educators of novices in their schools (Clarke et al., 2014).

Limitations

This case study followed three nontraditional student teachers in one program and region. The small, focused sample allowed for close attention to their daily experiences with remote video conferencing for supervision; however, it limits the extent to which the results can be generalized. Because these participants balanced work and caregiving, the findings speak most to similar candidates and settings. Program structures and local supports differ, so what worked here may look different elsewhere. Even so, the detailed description provides grounded insight into how design choices in remote supervision align with the realities of adult learners (Yin, 2018). Readers should exercise caution when extending the results to contexts that are not directly comparable.

This study also relied on recorded lessons, remote interviews, and conferences conducted over the Zoom and Vosaic platforms. These routines improved access and allowed careful review, including the ability to pause and replay, yet they can miss nonverbal cues that are easier to catch in person. The digital setup introduces risks, such as audio problems, dropped connections, or storage issues, that can interrupt data collection without careful planning. A blended design that adds limited in-person observation could balance these tradeoffs and strengthen triangulation across data sources and school contexts (Yin, 2018). A further limitation is the researcher's role as a university supervisor with experience in both in-person and virtual supervision. That background supported rapport and understanding, but it may also shape what the researcher expects to see. To reduce this risk, the researcher used reflexive notes and compared patterns across cases.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future work should center on the triad of candidate, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor. Studies can compare virtual, hybrid, and in-person supervision, using both stories from the triad and numerical indicators such as performance scores, persistence, and placement results to determine what works best (Yin, 2018). Future research should also involve larger and more diverse samples, including students from community colleges, regional public universities, private universities, and alternative certification programs. Additionally, it should compare findings across different states with varying licensure and placement policies. Researchers should also consider cost and scheduling, as programs and districts have limited time and resources (Kasworm, 2009; Kara et al., 2019). Clear evidence about which parts are must-haves and which are nice-to-haves would help partners plan more effectively. Equity should stay in

view so that adult learners with jobs and family duties can participate fully (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013).

Video tools fit this triad well. Future studies can track how people use recorded clips, time-stamped notes, and short coaching talks, then compare candidate self-reports with observations from cooperating teachers and supervisors, and, when possible, signs of student learning (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015; Gregory et al., 2017; Tripp & Rich, 2011). Outcomes should encompass not only performance but also retention, confidence, and overall well-being. Following candidates from student teaching into the first years can show whether feedback habits last and how they affect classroom practice (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). Design studies can test simple routines the triad can use during busy school days and share what is workable so programs can adopt the strongest patterns (Redmond et al., 2018; Sherin & Van Es, 2008).

Conclusion

This chapter synthesizes the answers to the guiding research question, translates those answers into implications for practice, acknowledges key limitations, and proposes directions for future research, thereby bringing the study to a coherent close. The analysis indicated that flexibility and access functioned as structural conditions that enabled high-quality feedback, reflective routines, purposeful technology use, and supportive relationships to take root for nontraditional candidates. When those conditions were present by design, adult learners could remain anchored in their communities and responsibilities while making steady progress toward licensure. The findings, therefore, positioned virtual supervision as a viable pathway that is both rigorous and humane, a conclusion consistent with evidence on effective online engagement and reflective professional learning for adults (Redmond et al., 2018; Schön, 1983). In this sense, the

study provided a pragmatic blueprint for preparing reflective and resilient new teachers in ways that widen participation and uphold professional standards across diverse contexts.

Looking ahead, the challenge for programs and partners is to treat flexible, relationship-rich, technology-supported supervision as a core strategy rather than a temporary fix in teacher preparation. Doing so requires institutional commitment to reliable routines that make presence and feedback predictable and to supports that lower the real cost of participation for adult learners who bring complex responsibilities to their studies. It also requires assessment practices that honor growth over time and research that attends to equity, context, and stakeholder experience through comparative and longitudinal designs. If those commitments are met, virtual supervision can function as a lever for widening participation in teaching while maintaining high standards for practice across schools and communities. The narratives at the heart of this project suggest that such a future is both possible and worth pursuing for candidates, mentors, and the students they will serve.

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APPENDIX A

BRADLEY University

DATE: 5 DEC 2024

TO: Kristi Stalter, Jana Hunzicker
FROM: Bradley University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research

STUDY TITLE: Exploring Virtual Supervision in Student Teaching: A Qualitative Case Study of Non- Traditional Students' Experiences and Challenges VERSION
CUHSR #: 24-088
SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Review

ACTION: Approved
APPROVAL DATE: 5 DEC 2024
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above referenced proposal. The Bradley University Committee on the Use of Human Subject in Research has reviewed your study and approval has been granted pursuant to 45 CFR 46.110(a) [expeditable under Category 7 [Research on group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs, or practices, and social behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.]

This research meets the regulatory requirements for approval as specified in 45 CFR 45. 111. Specifically, the risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits to subjects and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonable be expected to result, and that written informed consent will be sought from each prospective subject or the subjects legally authorized representative. The informed consent document meets the regulatory requirements as outlined in 45 CFR 46.116. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

All vita and ethics certificate are on file.

Please Note: Research must be conducted according to the proposal that was approved. Any revisions to the protocol must first be approved by the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research (CUHSR) prior to implementation and that substantial changes may result in the need for further review. Please submit a Request for Minor Modification of a Current Protocol found on our website at https://www.bradley.edu/academic/cio/osp/studies/cuhsr/forms/ should a need for a change arise.

While no untoward effects are anticipated, should they arise, please report any untoward effects to CUHSR immediately.

Please retain copies of all records pertaining to this study for a minimum of three (3) years from the study closure. Be aware that some professional standards may require researchers to retain records for a longer period of time.

Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research – 01 Bradley Hall
1501 W Bradley Ave.
Peoria, IL 61625

This study has been approved for one year. When the study is complete, please file a final status report. A form can be found on our website at https://www.bradley.edu/academic/cio/osp/studies/cuhsr/forms/. A continuing review is NOT required pursuant to 45 CFR 46.109(f)(i). If the study should extends beyond the deadline, please submit a modification to a protocol form and request more time.

This letter will serve as your written notice that the study is approved unless a more formal letter is needed. You can request a formal letter from the CUHSR secretary in the Office of Sponsored Programs

Andrew J Strubhar, PT, PhD
CUHSR Chair

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

Bradley University

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Research Study: "Exploring Virtual Supervision in Student Teaching: A Qualitative Case Study of Nontraditional Students' Experiences and Challenges"

Dear [Student Teacher Name],

I am conducting a research study titled "Exploring Virtual Supervision in Student Teaching: A Qualitative Case Study of Nontraditional Students' Experiences and Challenges," and invite you to participate. Your insights and experiences as a nontraditional student teacher engaged in virtual supervision are vital to this work.

Study Overview

This study explores nontraditional student teachers' experiences, challenges, and support needs under virtual supervision during their teaching placements. Participation involves engaging in four in-depth interviews. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes. These interviews are not part of the normal student-teaching process and are unique to this study.

Participation Details

- Interviews: Conducted virtually via Zoom, each lasting about 30 minutes.
- Interview Questions: You will be asked about your experiences and support needs.
- Duration: All interviews will occur between January 22, 2025, and May 15, 2025.

The data from these video interviews will be used solely for research purposes and will not impact your grade, evaluation, or standing in the student-teaching program. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw without penalty or consequence to your coursework or assessments.

Your name and any other information that can identify you will be stored separately from the research data. All interviews will be conducted in private Zoom sessions, and recordings will be securely stored on a password-protected device. Transcripts will be anonymized by removing names and other identifying information. However, while every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, it cannot be guaranteed due to the small sample size and specific settings (e.g., target area, community, schools, classrooms).

Next Steps

Please take the time to read the attached consent form thoroughly. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please get in touch with me at knstalt@ilstu.edu or 309-531-4636. If you are willing to participate, kindly reply to this email confirming your interest. We will schedule the first interview session at your convenience at the start of your student-teaching experience.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to contribute to our research. Your participation will help generate valuable insights that may improve virtual supervision practices for future nontraditional student teachers.

Sincerely,

Kristi Stalter

Researcher, Bradley University

Email: knstalt@ilstu.edu | Phone: 309-531-4636

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Bradley University

Study Title:

Exploring Virtual Supervision in Student Teaching: A Qualitative Case Study of Nontraditional Students' Experiences and Challenges

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research study. To be eligible, you must be a nontraditional student teacher, aged 18 years or older, currently engaged in virtual supervision during your teaching placement. Participation is voluntary; you may decline or stop at any time. Please read this entire form and ask any questions before deciding whether to participate.

Key Information About This Study

This study aims to explore the experiences, challenges, and support needs of nontraditional student teachers under virtual supervision during their student teaching placements. If you choose to participate, you will participate in four in-depth video interviews. These interviews are not part of the normal student-teaching process and are unique to this study. The interviews will explore your personal experiences with virtual supervision. The data gathered will be used solely for research purposes and will not impact your grade, evaluation, or standing in the student-teaching program. You may withdraw at any time without penalty.

What Is the Purpose of the Study?

The study examines the experiences of nontraditional student teachers who are supervised virtually during their student-teaching placements.

What Will Happen If You Take Part in This Study?

If you agree to participate, you will take part in four in-depth interviews. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will occur between January 22, 2025, and May 15, 2025. Interviews will be conducted virtually via Zoom, and all sessions will be audio- and video-recorded with your consent for accurate transcription. Recordings will be securely stored and destroyed after transcription. You will be asked about your experiences, challenges, and support needs as a nontraditional student teacher under virtual supervision. Basic background information about your educational experience will also be requested.

What Are the Risks of Participating in the Study?

What Are the Benefits of Participating in the Study? No risks or adverse reactions are anticipated. A possible risk includes mild stress from discussing personal experiences and challenges. This risk will be minimized by ensuring a supportive and confidential environment during interviews. No significant risks are expected.

There are no direct benefits to you. An indirect benefit includes contributing to improved virtual supervision practices that may support future nontraditional student teachers.

Are There Any Incentives for Participating in the Study?

No incentives are offered for participating in this study.

How Will Your Information Be Protected?

Your information will be stored on a password-protected computer. The researcher plans to publish the results in a formal research report and will not include any information that can directly identify you. Individuals who may need to see the data include members of the research team and the Bradley University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research (CUHSR).

After the Study, What Will Happen to the Data Collected?

Once the formal research report is published and the researcher has graduated from Bradley University, interview, observation, and document-based data collected for the study will be deleted from electronic storage and/or shredded if in paper form.

What Are the Costs?

There are no costs for participation in this study.

Your Participation Is Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. You do not need to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not result in any penalty.

Who Should I Contact With Questions or Problems About the Study?

If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher in charge: Kristi Stalter, 309-531-4635, kstalter2@bradley.edu.

Who Should I Contact About My Rights as a Research Participant?

For questions about your rights as a research participant, or to discuss concerns about the study with someone other than the researcher, please contact:

Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research (CUHSR)

Bradley University

1501 W. Bradley Avenue

Peoria, IL 61625

(309) 677-3877

Your Informed Consent

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood the information on this form and have decided to participate. You acknowledge that the consent information has been

explained to you and that your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. If you have additional questions during the study, you should contact the researcher.

I agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

First Interview

1. Can you tell me a little about your background and what led you to pursue a career in teaching?
2. How would you describe your current life circumstances, such as employment status, family responsibilities, and educational background?
3. How comfortable are you with the digital tools used for virtual supervision, and what support have you received to develop these skills?
4. How do you perceive the quality of feedback you expect to receive through virtual supervision compared to in-person feedback?
5. What challenges do you anticipate facing with virtual supervision compared to traditional in-person supervision?
6. How do you think virtual supervision will influence your reflective practice and professional growth?
7. How do you expect the flexibility of virtual supervision to affect your teaching practice and work-life balance, especially considering any family responsibilities you have?

Second Interview

8. How has virtual supervision impacted your ability to receive timely and constructive feedback?
9. Can you describe any challenges you have faced so far with virtual supervision compared to traditional in-person supervision?
10. How has virtual supervision influenced your reflective practice and professional growth?

11. How comfortable are you with the digital tools used for virtual supervision, and what support have you received to develop these skills?
12. How has the flexibility of virtual supervision affected your teaching practice and work-life balance, especially considering any family responsibilities you have?
13. Can you provide examples of how virtual supervision has enhanced your collaboration with your cooperating teacher and university supervisor?

Third Interview

14. How do you perceive the quality of feedback received through virtual supervision compared to in-person feedback?
15. Can you describe any challenges you have faced so far with virtual supervision compared to traditional in-person supervision?
16. What suggestions do you have for improving the virtual supervision process?
17. How has virtual supervision prepared you for the technological demands of modern classrooms?
18. Can you provide examples of how virtual supervision has enhanced your collaboration with your cooperating teacher and university supervisor?
19. How do you manage these alongside your teaching duties?

Fourth Interview

20. Reflecting on your overall experience, how has virtual supervision influenced your confidence and readiness to enter the teaching profession?
21. What specific challenges related to technology or digital tools have persisted throughout your virtual supervision experience, and how have you managed or overcome them?

22. In what ways has virtual supervision prepared you for managing the technological demands of modern classrooms?
23. What strategies or supports provided during virtual supervision were most beneficial in balancing your teaching responsibilities with personal commitments?
24. After completing virtual supervision, do you feel more prepared, less prepared, or equally prepared compared to peers who underwent traditional supervision? Please elaborate or provide examples.
25. If you were advising future nontraditional students considering virtual supervision, what specific recommendations would you offer to help them succeed?
26. Is there any additional training or support you believe would enhance the virtual supervision experience for future participants?