

Chapter 13

Mentoring and Support for the edTPA: A Mixed Methods Program Review of edTPA Support Practices

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ABSTRACT

The research question was: How effective is the current edTPA mentoring and support program for teacher candidates? This research utilized mixed method interactive program evaluation. An online survey collected teacher candidates' perceptions of mentoring and support for edTPA. The survey questions were organized around four constructs: Preparedness, support from instructor, support from university supervisors, and support from cooperating teacher. With $N = 46$, a comprehensive data analysis was conducted that identified areas of strength and need of the program. As a result, the researchers developed an edTPA mentoring and support program model.

INTRODUCTION

The Educator Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) is a performance assessment designed for pre-service teachers during the semester of student teaching. The edTPA was developed by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). Formerly associated with the School Redesign Network at Stanford University, SCALE, the program provides technical consulting and support to schools and districts using performance-based assessment as part of a multiple-measures system for evaluating student learning and measuring school performance. According to edTPA's official website, this performance assessment was officially announced as a fully operating teacher - performance assessment in fall 2013 after two years field testing with 12,000 teacher candidates. In the United States, 35

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0007-0.ch013

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states and the District of Colombia were implementing edTPA at different levels. It was a performance assessment “designed by the profession for the profession (edTPA, 2014).” The design of the edTPA was rooted in the methods and practices of National Board Teacher Certification (NBTC, 2014) and inclusive of numerous activities designed to demonstrate teaching competence. Among these activities were: Video taped lessons and various commentaries on teaching designed to extract deep knowledge of key aspects of teaching from NBTC candidates.

Likewise, the edTPA focuses on the central aspects of teaching practice, including: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment. In the edTPA, teacher candidates are charged with planning, implementing, and assessing a series of lessons known as a teaching segment. The common theme that streams across each of central aspects of teaching practice was the concept of academic language. Teacher candidates are charged with describing how they planned for, instructed and assessed their students’ understandings of academic language. Each of the central aspects of edTPA, namely planning, instruction, and assessment are further described in the next section of this text.

Planning

This is the central element of the edTPA, as planning is the lynchpin of any lesson. All lessons begin with a plan, and the lesson plan’s success or lack thereof is central to the success of the lesson. Within the edTPA Planning Task, teacher candidates are expected to submit a consecutive series of three to five lessons known as the lesson segment. Within the Planning Task, teacher candidates were expected to address the following elements of planning:

- Build content understanding.
- Support learner needs.
- Use knowledge of students in planning.
- Design assessments to monitor student learning.

Incorporating the above elements within the planning task enabled teacher candidates to justify their planning decisions via an exhaustive planning commentary where teacher candidates must support their planning practices with research-based theories and practices. The planning commentary was designed so that the teacher candidate must respond to various prompts in order to complete it.

Instruction

The edTPA Instruction Task is designed to coordinate the teacher candidate’s implementation of the teaching segment. The Instruction Task was characterized by the following elements:

- Development of a learning environment conducive to effective teaching.
- Engaging students in learning activities by a variety of means.
- Facilitating deep thinking among students.
- Further exploration of subject specific pedagogy.

Teacher candidates were also encouraged to video record each lesson within the lesson segment in order to identify and submit a segment of video representative of the teacher candidates ability to

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