Chapter 31
Data and Dialogue:
Cultivating Transformative Change in Teacher Preparation Programs

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ABSTRACT

To present a reflective case study of the change process in a teacher preparation program engaged in an edTPA implementation. This chapter will highlight how one institution is using teacher performance data and faculty dialogue to develop new directions for program improvement and transformative change. Additionally, this chapter will also present critical self-reflections from key stakeholders related to transformative change.

INTRODUCTION

Demands for teacher education reform have intensified in the 21st century with increased calls for accountability, higher standards, and an expansion of the research base (Cibulka, 2009; Wilson & Youngs, 2005). Additionally, efforts to link K-12 student performance to teacher characteristics are growing (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Goe, 2007; Wayne & Youngs, 2003; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001) as more states connect K-12 student performance to teacher evaluations and teacher preparation programs. Value-added modeling (VAM) has been applied to P-12 education to determine teachers' contributions to student learning. Data generated from VAM direct teacher preparation programs about where to look in their units for strengths and weaknesses, but not how to address them. Teacher Preparation Programs need valid and reliable performance assessments to provide actionable data upon which programs can direct meaningful change.

This chapter shares experiences from a large-teacher producing institution seeking to positively impact change in its programs and provides other teacher preparation programs (TPPs) three models for creating venues to utilize teacher candidate performance assessment data, such as edTPA. Analysis of these venues and the reflections of key programmatic leaders on those venues demonstrate the power of performance data and dialogue to foster transformative change in TPPs.

Situational Context

The need for change, for TPPs to improve candidate learning outcomes and positively impact K-12 student achievement, is evident (Diez, 2010; Henry, Purtell, Bastian, Fortner, Thompson, Campbell, Patterson, 2013). Yet organizational change in higher education is often a slow and challenging process (Ginsberg & Bernstein, 2011; Kezar, 2001; Schien, 1990). In this southeastern state, VAM data linking teachers' K-12 student achievement scores to their TPP were first available in 2011 (Carolina Institute for Public Policy, 2011). Required as a component of the teacher evaluation portion of the state's RTTT grant, the VAM data were presented to public institutions to digest. Criticisms of VAM methodology were raised by some teacher education faculty who dismissed it outright. As in other states, criticism of VAM targeted the models, the use of results, and citing blogs from Diane Ravitch (Ravitch, 2012) and others. Other faculty, while still considering VAM a sign of increased accountability and scrutiny on teacher preparation, decided to utilize it as a catalyst for change.

When viewed from a change-driven perspective, VAM data are helpful in determining which program graduates are making a positive impact on K-12 student achievement and those who are not, but VAM data do not answer the more important question: why? As a result, the Dean of the College of Education (DOE) pursued additional drill-down studies into the VAM data for the institution's graduates. Following the system-wide study – and influenced by the U.S. National Research Council (2010) study which found that TPPs lack evidence of what makes a novice teacher effective – the COE Dean initiated a series of drill-down studies, including validity and reliability analysis of all teacher candidate performance assessments at the institution. In this context, a drill-down study was a more focused analysis that sought to link K-12 student achievement to specific teacher candidate performance measures at the programmatic level. In doing so, analyses conducted at the university system level on pathways in teacher preparation (Henry, et al., 2014) were replicated at the program level using campus-developed assessments of teacher candidate readiness (Henry, et al., 2013). A powerful result of the drill-down studies was the analysis of the TPP's home-grown assessment of teacher candidate performance, including a candidate developed teaching portfolio, observational assessments from the student teaching internship, and dispositional assessments. None were found to be valid or reliable measures of teacher candidate performance. With this data in hand, the TPP immediately sought new, valid and reliable assessments of candidate performance, particularly a new teaching portfolio—enter edTPA.

VAM analyses by the university system and drill-down studies at the institutional level coincided with the rollout of the national edTPA pilot, engaging another powerful catalyst in transformative change. In 2010, the TPP was invited to participate in a pilot of the new edTPA (TPAC at the time), a consortium supported by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), with a goal of providing valid and reliable assessment data to drive program improvement and curricular reform.

In spring 2011, three teacher education programs (secondary English education, secondary history education, and middle grades education) entered the edTPA pilot because of their tight administrative structure and established core of university supervisors. Approximately 85 candidates piloted the edTPA

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