

Chapter 11

edTPA Preparation: Building Support Structures for Teacher Candidates

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover and describe the effectiveness of edTPA mentoring and support program designed by the researchers measured by teacher candidates' perceptions. Within that research purpose, a research theory and/or model was constructed to describe a framework for effective preparation and teacher candidates' support program, which might lead to a successful completion/submission of edTPA entry and increase the probability of attaining a state teaching license. The research question was: What are the teacher candidates' perceptions of the edTPA preparation and support procedures designed by the researchers? 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, understanding, submission and support from instructor, university supervisors, cooperating teacher, and resources. A comprehensive data analysis was conducted that identified areas of strength and need of the program.

INTRODUCTION

With the increased adoption of edTPA as a pre-service teacher performance assessment and licensing requirement by many states, schools of education preparation programs are facing increased pressure to effectively prepare teacher candidates to successfully complete a passing edTPA portfolio. This chapter presents the findings of a study that measured the effectiveness of the edTPA mentoring and support program for teacher candidates. The questions answered in this chapter are: How does the program at Cardinal Stritch University introduce and practice the edTPA? What forms of edTPA practice, support,

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resources have the program implemented in student teaching seminar? How does the assessment management system (Livetext) support edTPA? How well are the “support procedures” working for teacher candidates? What lessons have been learned from the implementation of the mentoring and support model?

Background

The issue that focuses this chapter is the teacher candidates’ perception of the edTPA (education Teacher Performance Assessment) mentoring and support program effectiveness in completing and submitting an entry. The theoretical framework is built around two critical components: the edTPA performance assessment and program evaluation. The edTPA is the performance assessment that will be used to grant licensure to initial educators in the research site state based on policies implemented by the state’s Department of Public Instruction. A mentoring and support program has been designed by the researchers to prepare the teacher candidates to complete and submit an edTPA entry.

Effective classroom pedagogy is founded in three main modules: Use of effective classroom instruction strategies, use of effective classroom management strategies, and use of effective curriculum design strategies (Marzano, 2007). The most influential factor in an effective school is the effectiveness of individual classroom teachers. Many researchers agree that effective teachers have a significant positive influence on student achievement despite any other factors that might occur in the school (Marzano, 2007). The edTPA performance assessment measures teacher candidate readiness in planning (effective strategies based in knowledge of students prior knowledge, culture, and other assets), instruction (including effective classroom management) and assessment (analysis of student learning) will be used as a qualifying assessment for teaching license attainment in the research site state.

In a study conducted by Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Chung Wei (2012) from Stanford University titled “Developing and Assessing Beginning Teacher Effectiveness: The Potential of Performance Assessments” linking pre-service teachers’ performance assessment with their early career effectiveness found that the Elementary Literacy as well as Elementary Mathematics edTPA planning, assessment and academic language subscales were strong predictors of teacher effectiveness. These findings aligned with the foundation of the edTPA in that they prompted teacher candidates to plan to meet the needs of students, to analyze their teaching, to analyze students performance and make data informed decisions. Another interesting finding from the study is the relationship between teacher candidates’ preparation and what they learned from edTPA experience. The more the teacher candidate felt prepared by their program, the more they felt they learned from edTPA, which should be embedded in a supportive environment for learning to teach (Darling-Hammond, Newton & Chung, 2012).

The vision of the Education Department at the State Level is to provide well-prepared and effective teachers to educate all students in the state. To fulfill this vision, the department established guidelines to make sure that all initial educators are ready to teach effectively in the classroom. edTPA has been chosen by the department as one of the performance assessment to certify/license potential initial educators; it is one of the tools employed to achieve the department vision. All teacher candidates applying for an initial educator license are required to earn a passing score on the edTPA before applying for their license. The department published this mandate “Starting in August 2016, all initial license candidates in will be required to successfully complete the edTPA as a condition of licensure. However, as of August 2015, all educator preparation programs must include the edTPA as part of their program requirements” (DPI website <http://tepd.dpi.wi.gov/epp/edtpa>).

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