Chapter 12
Case Study and Self Study as Means for Program Improvement in Teacher Education

Jahnette Wilson
University of Houston, USA

Samuel R. Brower
University of Houston, USA

Teresa Edgar
University of Houston, USA

Amber Thompson
University of Houston, USA

Shea Culpepper
University of Houston, USA

ABSTRACT

Proponents of the evidence-based movement in education maintain that decisions around policy and practice should be grounded in data outcomes. However, insufficient research exists on data use in teacher education programs as much of the research on data use is concentrated on K-12 programs. The purpose of this case study was to investigate the data use practices of an educator preparation program so as to facilitate program improvement efforts. The collective qualitative data described in this study was key to informing continuous improvement areas within this educator preparation program. Therefore, this case study offers insight as to how qualitative data can support and inform program improvement efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

The evidence-based movement in education contends that decisions around policy and practice should be grounded in data outcomes (Moss, 2007; Trinder 2000). That said, little research exists on data use in teacher education programs as much of the research on data use is centered on K-12 programs. Further, there are no "universally accepted means" of assessing the performance of teacher preparation programs (CCSSO, 2016). Accountability and rigor in teacher education have been the focus of recent policy initiatives (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015; CCSSO, 2016). With such an enormous focus on accountability, the importance of data-driven decision making for program improvement has gained significant attention over the last ten years (Aguerrebere, 2009; CCSSO, 2012; CCSSO, 2016, CCSSO, 2018, CAEP, 2013, Davis & Peck, 2018, Datnow & Hubbard, 2015, Mandinach & Gummer, 2015, Easton 2009, 2010). Data-driven decision making describes a "systematic collection, analysis, examination, and interpretation of data to inform practice and policy in educational settings" (Mandinach, 2012). With the rising external pressure of accountability, certain parameters associated with program data are required. For example, data collected for accountability purposes must be comparable from program to program. Therefore, the data must be standardized in an effort to capture a single measure to be used to assess the performance of the educators on program quality. However, standardized and quantitative data do not necessarily offer support and guidance to educators regarding what students do and do not understand (Wiess, 2012). .

However, there is no absolute consensus for assessing the performance of teacher preparation programs (TPP) (CCSSO, 2016). A 2013 report by the National Academy of Education (NAE) posits, "systems for evaluating TPPs use various types of evidence – each with its particular strengths and limitations – to make inferences about the quality of the preparation experience and its role in producing employable, high-quality teachers" (p. 1-2). Targeted attributes that are related to teacher preparation quality commonly measured include admissions and recruitment, quality and content of instruction, quality of student teaching field experiences, faculty qualifications, effectiveness and success regarding the preparation of quality teachers, and attrition rates.

A plethora of data is used in an attempt to evaluate the nuances of teacher preparation that are not necessarily observable or even quantifiable. Typical measures include grade point averages, percentage of minority students in a program, number of candidates in high-need areas, academic credentials, full-time vs part-time higher education faculty, textbooks, assignments, syllabi, required courses, fieldwork policies and hours, mentor qualifications, student teaching observation records,