

Agricultural Education Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of the edTPA

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The edTPA has recently emerged within the past few years as an innovative Teacher Performance Assessment and is currently adopted to some extent in 34 states. Researchers conducted four focus groups with 16 teacher candidates during and immediately after completion of the edTPA at North Carolina State University. When asked to articulate about their experience with the edTPA, numerous participants believed edTPA to be nearly overwhelming and confusing. Participants also felt the edTPA did not adequately capture their totality of their student teaching experience. These stresses and general confusion were not alleviated with assistance from the cooperating teacher. They believed the edTPA enhanced deep, focused reflection on their teaching practice. Teacher candidates also believed the edTPA, while not adequately capturing the totality of the student teaching experience, did serve as a quality assessment of their teaching practice.

Keywords: edTPA, teacher candidate assessment, portfolio assessment, agricultural education

Introduction/Conceptual Framework

Historically, teachers had little control over the tests that evaluate them (Darling-Hammond, 2012). State teaching standards commonly used evaluation means of traditional pencil-and-paper licensure tests typically focusing on basic skills such as subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Guaglianone, Payne, Kinsey, & Chiero, 2009). The Praxis Series tests are currently used in determining which teacher education candidates are qualified to obtain licensure for teaching. These tests are composed of reading, writing, and mathematics sections in the form of essays and multiple-choice questions that evaluate core academic skills for educators (Educational Testing Service, 2015). The Praxis II tests individuals on subject-specific content, but is also in the form of essay and multiple-choice questions.

Darling-Hammond (2012) argued that for decades, teachers' scores on

traditional paper-and-pencil tests of basic skills and subject matter, like the Praxis, "haven't been significantly related to classroom effectiveness" (p. 10). Instead, Darling-Hammond (2006) stressed the implementation and use of authentic assessments, such as teacher performance assessments, "offer more valid measures of teaching knowledge and skill than traditional teacher tests, and they inspire useful changes in programs as they provide rich information about candidate abilities—goals that are critical to an evaluation agenda that both documents and improves teacher education" (p. 121).

Adoption of edTPA at North Carolina State University

Starting in the fall of 2013, the College of Education at North Carolina State University began implementing the edTPA in advance of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction mandating all teacher

preparation institutions have a “nationally normed and valid pedagogy assessment to determine clinical practice performance” (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2016, ¶8) in place by July 1, 2017. College and programmatic leadership deemed it pertinent to take initiative and work through three years of a pilot phase before full implementation. Further, edTPA scores assisted in accreditation through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.

Conceptual Framework for edTPA

The edTPA has recently emerged within the past few years as an innovative Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA). The edTPA was created and developed through a partnership between Stanford University faculty and staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2014). Developers of edTPA drew from 25 years of experience of developing performance-based assessments of teaching including National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and PACT (AACTE, 2014). While SCALE does not pinpoint a specific theory as guiding the development of the edTPA, an exhaustive literature review was conducted to identify foundational research and relevant studies informing the development of the edTPA (SCALE, 2015).

The edTPA is a subject-specific assessment that includes versions in 27 different teaching fields, including agricultural education. The goals of edTPA are to improve student outcomes and strengthen the information base guiding improvement, accreditation, and evaluation of teacher preparation programs (AACTE, 2014). Additionally, the edTPA is designed to be used in combination with other

measures as a requirement for licensure and to guide professional development for teachers across the career continuum (AACTE, 2014).

Darling-Hammond (2012) stated, “edTPA is designed to examine whether prospective teachers are ready to teach by reviewing candidates’ plans, videotapes of instruction, evidence of student work and learning, and commentary on student work” (p. 12). Teachers’ ability to develop academic language is also examined during assessment, which is in line with new Common Core standards (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The edTPA gathers evidence of teacher candidates’ work in planning, instruction, and assessment to help predict teacher quality. More specifically, edTPA for agricultural education is comprised of three tasks and has 15 rubrics evaluating these tasks. Task 1 involves planning, which includes the following: planning for agricultural-related understandings; planning to support varied student learning needs; using knowledge of students to inform teaching and learning; identifying and supporting language demands; and planning assessments to monitor and support student learning. Task 2 involves instruction, and includes the use of video clip(s) for evaluating the following: learning environment, engaging students in learning; deepening student learning; subject-specific pedagogy; and analyzing teaching effectiveness. Task 3 evaluates assessment and includes the following: analysis of student learning; providing feedback to guide learning; student use of feedback; using assessment to inform instruction; and analysis of student learning.

According to the AACTE website, edTPA is the first standards-based assessment to become available to teacher preparation programs across the country. Currently, 606 teacher preparation programs in 33 states and the District of Columbia are

participating in edTPA (AACTE, 2014). More specifically, seven states currently have an edTPA policy in place, while the remaining are either taking steps towards implementation or participating in edTPA (AACTE, 2014). States with an edTPA policy in place have statewide policies requiring the completion of a state-approved performance assessment as part of program requirements or for state licensure and/or, state program accreditation (AACTE, 2014). While North Carolina does not have a state policy in place specific to the use of the edTPA, ten institutions are currently participating in edTPA (AACTE, 2014). The edTPA was introduced in North Carolina in 2010 as a “grassroots engagement of faculty and programs initiated by UNC-Chapel Hill, East Carolina, and Winston-Salem State deans” (SCALE, 2014, p. 9).

Research on the use of performance assessments in teacher education has yielded mixed findings as to the benefits on teaching practice. Some teacher candidates recognized the contribution of the performance assessment in increasing their awareness of their instructional considerations and improving practice (Okhremtchouk Seiki, Gilliland, Ateh, Wallace, & Kato, 2009). Chung (2008) found teacher candidates were better able to identify and address academic needs, develop lessons with a central focus, and thoroughly assess student learning. A study by Wiechman (2013) found teaching candidates recognized an improvement in reflective practice, more effective lesson planning, and improved assessment practices to facilitate student learning.

The edTPA is based in large measure on the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT). In a study of California teacher candidates conducted by Pecheone and Chung (2006), 60% of participants felt they had learned important skills through the completion of the instructional task, such as reflection and

assessment of student learning. Okhremtchouk, Newell, and Rosa (2013) found PACT to be beneficial to design a unit and differentiate instruction. One participant reported, “One thing that I found most useful is the intense reflection that you have to do for PACT. I now constantly reflect on my lessons and how they can be tweaked to better fit my students’ needs” (Okhremtchouk et al., 2013, p. 14). The student teachers ($N = 3$) of Sharp’s (2010) study made an effort to address individual student learning needs through the use of differentiated instruction.

In contrast, research has also noted several challenges associated with the completion of a performance assessment. In a study by Okhremtchouk et al. (2009), participants indicated the completion of the PACT resulted in much stress and anxiety. Also noted was the negative impact on other university coursework, teaching practices, and personal time. Ninety-four percent of students stated the PACT affected their personal time and life in a significantly negative way (Okhremtchouk et al., 2009). Additional research by De Lay and Warner (2013) recognized the substantial time investment needed for completion of a performance assessment. During the completion of the PACT, teacher candidates recognized a detrimental effect on their planning and delivery of non-PACT lessons, as well as challenges to daily classroom management, decrease in time to meet with resident teachers, and decrease in the quality of work submitted for other courses not related to PACT (Okhremtchouk et al., 2013). With daily classroom management, one participant reported, “[PACT] completely took over my life. I felt I had little time to focus on teaching, which is the focus of the program” (Okhremtchouk et al., 2013, p. 11). Furthermore, decrease in the quality of work submitted for other courses not related to PACT was evident in one participant’s statement, “[w]ork produced for PACT as

well as other courses was sub-par, In essence, I did things to get them done,” (p. 12) demonstrating it was difficult for students to submit quality work due to balancing time between PACT and other courses (Okhremtchouk et al., 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The edTPA was implemented at North Carolina State University in the fall of 2013 and piloted by the first group of agricultural education teacher candidates in the spring of 2014. Although edTPA is currently being piloted and therefore considered a low-stakes assessment, it is critical to examine the experiences of teacher candidates during the process of completing the edTPA. The increasing influence of the edTPA on the teacher certification process makes it an important area for research. Beginning in 2017, all teacher education students seeking licensure will have to earn a passing score on the edTPA along with successful completion of student teaching and other course-related assignments.

The objectives of the research were to examine North Carolina State University agricultural teacher candidates’

1. Perspectives of the edTPA,
2. Perceptions of the challenges and barriers of the edTPA,
3. Perceptions of the perceived benefits of the edTPA.

Method

In an effort to closely examine the perceptions of the student teaching cohort specific to the completion of the edTPA, the focus group method was deemed to be the most appropriate approach to gather data. Focus groups also “provide insight into attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of participants” (Krueger, 1994, p. 19).

Questions asked during the focus group session were informed by the research

objectives. Participants were asked the following questions:

1. How are you feeling now that your edTPA has been completed and submitted?
2. What did you learn about your teaching from the edTPA?
3. What were some of the concerns you experienced between the first seminar and the submission? What would you say was the biggest concern?
4. What/who do you think was the most helpful resource? In what ways were they the most helpful?
5. How has the edTPA influenced or informed your teaching as you have continued in your student teaching experience?
6. What kind of valuable learning or development as a teacher did you experience that you feel wasn’t able to be demonstrated via the edTPA?

This study was conducted using a census. Participants of this study included 16 undergraduate students at North Carolina State University working towards an undergraduate degree in agricultural education. Participating students were completing their student teaching experience during the spring 2014 semester in which the edTPA was being piloted. Teacher candidates were all enrolled in a seminar course, AEE 490, taken in their final semester. It was communicated to teacher candidates by their AEE 490 course instructors that the edTPA would count as 22.5% of their final grade and was a high-stakes assessment, meaning a passing score on the edTPA was required to pass the course.

At the beginning of the study, the accessible population was 16 participants. This population was used for the midterm questionnaire ($n = 16$) and first focus group ($n = 15$) in March. There were only 15 participants in the first focus group because

one participant was absent due to illness. It is important to note the population changed throughout the course of the study due to two participants not completing the edTPA. At the end of the study, the population decreased by two ($N = 14$). The participant absent from the first focus group was not one of the participants that failed to complete the student teaching experience.

Prior to the first focus group, the primary researcher met with three other members of the research committee to discuss the facilitation of focus groups and the questions to be used. The guiding questions for the focus groups were agreed upon by the researcher and committee members as well as approved by the Institutional Review Board. Dooley (2007) states most qualitative researchers are guided by a set of basic questions and issues to explore, but deviations may occur in order to capture nuances and emerging trends not previously determined. The focus group guideline consisted of open-ended questions regarding students' experiences with edTPA in order to gain as much insight as possible.

Focus groups are typically composed of six to ten participants per group (Krueger, 1994; Merriam, 2009). With that recommendation for number of participant in a group, the census was divided equally between two groups. Once students were in their designated focus groups, they were asked to sign a consent form to ensure confidentiality of information for both the researcher and participants. They were also asked to develop a pseudonym to conceal their identity for the purpose of confidentiality. The focus groups were conducted in the same classrooms used for the seminar course to adhere to qualitative research's naturalistic approach. An audio recording device was used to record the duration of the focus groups and field notes were taken throughout the duration of the focus groups.

Krueger (1994) states focus groups are conducted in series in order to detect trends and patterns across groups. As such, two focus groups were held. The first focus group (FG1) was held in March briefly after participating teacher candidates had submitted their completed edTPA. The second focus group (FG2) was held a month after teacher candidates completed edTPA, during their final student teaching seminar. The focus group recordings were transcribed and analyzed using coding and the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009). Different pieces of data from the focus groups were color-coded based on similar content. Each different color represented a different word, concept, or idea. These individual pieces of color-coded data were selected and constantly compared with each of the other transcripts until patterns emerged. Once patterns were apparent, these were categorized and developed into themes, also described by Dooley (2007) as "a provisional code or name" (p. 37).

Findings

Objective 1: Examine Teacher Candidates' Perspectives of the edTPA

The first objective was to examine the perspectives of teacher candidates specific to the edTPA. Initially teacher candidates were asked about their general thoughts and experience overall regarding edTPA. The first thoughts that came to mind from participants included, "confusion", "overwhelming", "cringe", and "hectic" (FG1, FG2). One teacher candidate said edTPA was a "foggy cloud the entire time" (FG2). Another teacher candidate expressed she felt like she was getting her national board (FG1). One teacher candidate stated, "I felt like I was burnt out before I even started" (FG1).

When asked about their self-efficacy and confidence as a teacher on a scale of 1 to 10 during edTPA, multiple teacher

candidates reported low levels of less than five. One teacher candidate specifically reported, "Nerves about video-taping brought my confidence down" (FG1). Another teacher candidate noted, "I felt like there was anxiety surrounding [edTPA], like we didn't know what we were getting into" (FG1).

Theme 1: edTPA does not adequately capture the teacher candidate experience. A subtheme identified aside from initial comments regarding edTPA was teacher candidates felt edTPA did not adequately encompass all aspects of agricultural education. Teacher candidates in FG1 described edTPA as very content specific. One teacher candidate quoted that when it comes to agricultural education, "I feel like it's not like your everyday classroom" (FG1). One teacher candidate noted, "It feels like we were only tested on a few specific things that aren't really that important in the grand scheme of things" (FG1). Another teacher candidate went into further explanation of how edTPA did not adequately capture her teaching experience,

I think for other education majors, edTPA is more cookie cutter and fits them better. But edTPA didn't know I was at school Monday's and Thursday's until 9 pm doing officer meetings and parliamentary procedure practice. And edTPA didn't know about the fruit sale we had. There are just so many things agriculture education does that edTPA didn't address. It was very content specific, but we do so much more. (FG1)

Objective 2: Examine Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of the Challenges and Barriers of the edTPA

The second objective was to determine any challenges and overall barriers of the edTPA as expressed by participants.

Two major themes emerged as the most challenging during the course of teacher candidates' edTPA experience.

Theme 1: early timing of the due date for edTPA was challenging for teacher candidates. The early timing of the edTPA was a major concern for teacher candidates during their student teaching experience. Given the difference in schedules for universities and public high schools, the beginning of the semester was at different times, with universities beginning a new semester three weeks prior to public high schools. One teacher candidate noted, "For the first three weeks we are [in the high school], we aren't teaching since they are finishing up their semester" (FG1). Other teacher candidates in FG1 also expressed the issue with semester timing,

I found it hard that it was due so early. One, because it was due at the beginning of our teaching so we were getting used to everything anyways. (FG1)

Seems like edTPA is better suited for those teaching in the fall due to time trade-off. (FG1)

Timing was terrible. I was frustrated with the video, not comfortable with my teaching yet, and not enough time to implement everything. (FG1)

A subtheme that emerged from the timing of edTPA was the issue of timing in course sequence and course content. Aside from the general timing of edTPA at the beginning of the university semester and the early due date, participants expressed the timing affected the topic selected for their learning segment. Many teacher candidates felt it was challenging to choose higher order thinking topics that edTPA required so early in the semester. In reference to course content, simply stated by a teacher candidate, "Because of timing, it was out of sequence"

(FG1). Many students felt it was difficult selecting a topic due to semester timing. One student expressed, “I had a hard time picking a topic because it was so early in the semester that we should be teaching basics like FFA, SAE, and stuff like that before getting into our topic” (FG1). Another student stated, “It’s difficult having to pick higher level thinking like what [edTPA] wanted without having to put any of the lower level stuff in there because all my kids had never had any animal science before” (FG1). Three teacher candidates followed up by saying,

I couldn't jump too far into my animal science curriculum, because I hadn't got that base knowledge and terminology that I would be using throughout the curriculum. (FG1)

I had a lot of freshman so it took a little longer to plan and get that base knowledge. (FG1)

That's going to be our biggest hurdle, um, trying to fit in something that has higher order thinking that you didn't have to wait until the end of the semester to build that base knowledge up to. (FG1)

To summarize, one student stated that in regards to edTPA requirements, it was “strange having to get kids to the level you want to see, but not having the time to do it” (FG1).

Theme 2: incorporating academic language into both agricultural education instruction and the edTPA portfolio was challenging. Another major barrier to edTPA was the inclusion of academic language in both the handbook and the edTPA scoring rubrics. Additionally, teacher candidates were expected to help their students learn and use the academic language of agricultural education. One teacher candidate stated, “[edTPA] seemed to have been written by

nuclear engineers, it could have been much simpler written” (FG1). Similarly, another candidate said, “I would have liked more clear explanations than just a number and some really detailed, fancy words” (FG1). Many students felt the edTPA was testing them on how well they could perform with reading and writing, as clearly expressed by one student,

I felt like I was being tested on how well I could read and write because some of those prompts I had to look up the words. I didn't feel that I could do my best when I didn't understand what it was asking me. (FG1)

Other students felt their work was repetitive due to the repetitive nature of the prompts, adding to the complexity of edTPA (FG1, FG2). A teacher candidate stated, “[edTPA] was too much information-instruction overload. Between the handbook, rubrics, commentary prompts, it was almost like, ‘OK, which one do I need to pay more attention to?’” (FG1).

Many participants when asked how they would have liked additional help on edTPA responded with help regarding edTPA language. Participants wanted to have more examples, a more simplified version of the rubrics, and a more thorough explanation of the commentary prompts.

Theme 3: lack of cooperating teacher support in completing the edTPA.

A third theme that emerged during the course of this study was the lack of support provided by cooperating teachers (CT) during the edTPA experience. Since 2014 represented the initial pilot year of edTPA implementation at North Carolina State University, cooperating teachers were learning about edTPA alongside of teacher candidates. The teacher candidate supervisor apprised CTs of the edTPA requirement and provided limited resources about edTPA. It

was not an expectation of CTs to assist teacher candidates in completing the edTPA. However, some cooperating teachers had been through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification process, so they more fully understood the task before teacher candidates. Still, as a primary mentoring figure in teacher candidates' lives, teacher candidates expected their cooperating teachers to assist with the edTPA. When asked during FG1 what advice could be given to teacher candidates in future semesters, one teacher candidate responded,

CT assistance. How can the university support our CTs and give them a little snapshot of this process. Providing support for CTs and progress monitoring. I wish mine knew more about what I had to do. (FG1)

Another teacher candidate recommended, “[teacher education faculty] should give CTs a heads-up in the fall so they are prepared and aware. Prepare the CTs for it. Mine was like, I don’t know if I ever want to have a student teacher again after this” (FG2). One teacher candidate noted the added assistance provided by a CT who had navigated the process for national board certification,

My CT was national board certified, so that helped me out a lot. If I needed help on something, she would know exactly what they wanted. She made the biggest difference in my edTPA experience. (FG2)

Objective 3: Examine Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of the Perceived Benefits of the edTPA

Although there were many challenges of edTPA expressed, such as timing and academic language, teacher candidates also

highlighted many benefits perceived of the edTPA experience.

Theme 1: reflection on teaching was enhanced via the edTPA. Many teacher candidates felt the assessment was a good reflection tool that helped with the identification of teaching strengths and weaknesses. The researcher asked teacher candidates to evaluate their self-efficacy on a scale of 1 to 10 before and after their edTPA experience. A teacher candidate expressed, “I thought I was teaching at a 6 or 7, but after looking at the prompts for the self-reflection, edTPA did show me a lot of what I wasn’t doing, so more like a 3 or 4” (FG1). Another teacher candidate expanded on this first candidate’s comment by noting, “Yeah, it did do a good job of showing me, ‘Oh, I need to ask more questions,’ so it was a good reflection tool” (FG1). When asked about one thing from edTPA to take back into teaching practice, one teacher candidate noted, “I think it helped a lot on reflection, looking at what I did and what I could do better next time” (FG1).

Apart from edTPA as an overall reflection tool, a subtheme that emerged was many teacher candidates viewed the video component to be the most beneficial contributor to reflection on teaching. One teacher candidate stated, “I think I’ll videotape myself every semester over the years and see how I improve” (FG2). In regards to the video portion, three teacher candidates all stated how the video served as a beneficial aspect of edTPA,

Looking back at it, I think that the videos were good because I learned a lot from watching my video and seeing myself teach because, I mean, you don’t realize you’re doing stuff in the classroom. (FG2)

I felt like that was one of the key parts of the video--to see how we

gave feedback and actually witness that instead of us writing about it, like it gives you a better evidence of that skill. (FG1)

I think that, no matter what the format is, student teachers and teachers should always have to film themselves and look at themselves--like that was actually my favorite part. (FG1)

In fact, when asked if teacher candidates could change one thing about edTPA, a couple teacher candidates replied they would have liked more visual evidence. One teacher candidate expressed, "I would have liked a little more video evidence so it wouldn't rely on how well you can type" (FG2). Two other teacher candidates stated,

If I were to change one thing about the edTPA, I would maybe have more visual evidence and not so much of the commentary with prompts, because I feel like people that can be great teachers, maybe can't write it out as well, and that seemed to be the bulk of the assessment, was how well I can write and explain what I did, and not necessarily how well I did what I did. (FG1)

I feel like more visual evidence, more evidence of the hands on activities, more evidence of the hands on assessment I gave rather than limiting those to three caveat pages. I feel like that's a better assessment of how I'm performing in the classroom rather than can I research some theories, can I put it all on paper. I think visual evidence is where we should be graded at, rather than what we could say we did. (FG1)

Theme 2: edTPA served as a quality assessment of teaching practice. Another

theme that emerged as a benefit was the edTPA served as a good assessment of participants' own teaching practices. One candidate noted, "[a]side from the confusing language, [edTPA] does accomplish what we learned and it is a good assessment, it's just poorly put together" (FG1). Two candidates both expressed appreciation of edTPA as an assessment tool:

I really felt like edTPA was a great assessment tool because it does incorporate so many, um, areas. It's got a section that can evaluate how well you plan, how well you work, how well you assess your students with physical or academic challenges. I felt like it did a good job of assessing our rapport. (FG1)

I felt it is a good assessment of our teaching, not only with what we can do in the classroom, but how we prepare for teaching and the way that we evaluate students. I know that I can give a much better assessment now since I've completed edTPA. (FG2)

Theme 3: teacher candidates felt confident of future teaching success as a result of successful edTPA completion.

One major benefit of edTPA was increased overall preparation and confidence for future teaching practice. One teacher candidate noted, "The overall picture of [edTPA] encompassed everything we have learned, from planning to implementing instruction, evaluating and assessment, so it was a good summary" (FG2). Another teacher candidate followed by saying, "I feel more confident. It all brought what I learned in the past two years together" (FG2).

Other than the benefits of reflection and assessment, many teacher candidates felt that overall edTPA would assist future teaching practices, specifically in getting a

teaching job and potential national board certification. Many teacher candidates expressed that edTPA would be helpful with future jobs as a teacher,

I used my lesson plans and materials, assessments, in my portfolio. (FG2)

Lessons to take for the future, for example, in interviews and future teaching. (FG2)

Employers might think we are better qualified for a job. If they see something with such extent and reflection, it might look better. Helps in the long run, seeing everything you're expected to do and look at. (FG2)

Teacher candidates also expressed the edTPA experience was a good precursor to the National Board Certification. One teacher candidate stated, "I think [edTPA] will help me complete the national board" (FG2). Another teacher candidate further emphasized this,

It definitely got you talking about or practicing how to write about education and being in a professional literacy manner about what you did and everything like that because it definitely mirrors the national boards. (FG2)

Limitations

Because this study was conducted with one group of 16 teacher candidates in agricultural education, caution should be taken when generalizing the findings and conclusions of this study. The intent of this qualitative research was not to generalize to all populations of CTE teacher candidates who might complete the edTPA, but to explore the experience of these teacher candidates in agricultural education.

Conclusions/Implications/ Recommendations

When asked to articulate about their experience with the edTPA, similar to findings of Okhremtchouk et al. (2009), these teacher candidates believed edTPA to be nearly overwhelming and confusing. Stresses included much time investment necessary for successful edTPA completion, similar to the findings of De Lay and Warner (2013) and Okhremtchouk et al. (2013).

Teacher candidates also felt the edTPA did not adequately capture their totality of their student teaching experience especially regarding advising career and technical student organizations (CTSOs), providing experiential learning opportunities, and engaging in the community. These teacher candidates expressed stress at completing the edTPA by the midpoint of their student teaching semester. Part of the confusion stemmed from the difficult language of the edTPA documents and the challenge of incorporating academic language into classroom instruction. These stresses and general confusion were not alleviated with assistance from the cooperating teacher.

Embedded within these areas of challenge and confusion are several implications for CTE teacher educators. First, teacher educators using the edTPA must understand the components and purpose of the edTPA relative to the nuances of the different CTE fields. They may want to incorporate components of edTPA into early teacher preparation courses and model the kinds of directed reflection found in edTPA. While not teaching to the test, certainly exposure to the kinds of tasks and reflections in the edTPA would alleviate teacher candidates' anxiety and confusion. Finally, the edTPA should be used to assess only those components of teacher preparation for which the instrument was designed: classroom instruction. Teacher educators

must continue to seek effective methods of assessing teacher candidates' knowledge and skill in the realms of CTSOs, experiential learning, and community engagement.

Even though teacher candidates cited several negative aspects of the edTPA portfolio assessment, they did express several positives. They believed the edTPA enhanced deep, focused reflection on their teaching practice. Reflection on teaching practices, especially reflection on specific components like assessment, individualized education plans, and academic language, may be challenging to incorporate into the daily routine of a practicing teacher. Because teacher education faculty required the edTPA be completed near the midpoint of the student teaching semester, teacher candidates were forced to reflect on their early teaching practice deeply and frequently.

From a developmental standpoint, there was likely benefit to this deep, frequent reflection early in student teaching. Teacher educators may want to consider structuring the student teaching semester so the edTPA is due relatively early in the semester. This may allow teacher candidates the opportunity for deep, focused reflection on teaching at a time when they may only be teaching a partial load. And, this type of focused reflection may help uncover effective teaching practices that can be promulgated or it may expose incorrect or ineffective teaching before it becomes routine.

The focus of the reflection on teaching practice that is embedded in the edTPA could comprise an entire line of research. How are effective teaching practices uncovered through completion of the task commentaries in edTPA? What is the impact of this reflection on forming a reflective practitioner? Do teacher candidates continue to reflect on specific teaching aspects, like individualized instruction, academic language, and learning assessment, after the edTPA is submitted?

Teacher candidates also believed the edTPA, while not adequately capturing the totality of the student teaching experience, did serve as a quality assessment of their teaching practice. Certainly, these teacher candidates realized the edTPA did not take into account important aspects of a well-rounded student teaching experience. Still, most teacher candidates realized the edTPA did encompass sufficient teaching knowledge and skill to serve as a fair representation of their teaching ability.

The implication of this finding is the edTPA appears to reflect an assessment of quality teaching from the perspective of teacher candidates in agriculture. So, while arduous and time-consuming, agriculture teacher candidates agreed the edTPA was a quality measure of their classroom teaching effectiveness.

From a research perspective, one could imagine a line of research that delves into how to structure the edTPA so it encompasses the unique requirements of the student teaching experience in CTE areas. What artifacts would teacher candidates submit to prove their knowledge and skills beyond classroom teaching? What prompts would be appropriate to guide written commentaries? What would comprise the scoring rubrics for each component?

Finally, teacher candidates felt confident of their future teaching success as a result of successfully completing the edTPA. Perhaps the fact that teacher candidates completed a difficult, time-consuming task like composing the edTPA portfolio gave them confidence in their teaching ability.

Teacher educators must understand they will need to assist teacher candidates in understanding the components of the edTPA, just as they promote and encourage teacher candidates in completing the assessment. Teacher educators may have the confidence that successful completion of this task measures teacher candidates' knowledge and

skill such that it also boosts their self-efficacy in teaching. Research should be conducted to determine the source and strength of the confidence, or self-efficacy, in teaching ability expressed by these teacher candidates. How did the edTPA boost teacher self-efficacy? What about the tasks and/or completion of the assessment influenced these teacher candidates?

While not perfect, edTPA appears to challenge teacher candidates. In similar measure, it appears to satisfactorily assess initial teaching knowledge and skills. Perhaps because of the deep, focused reflection and the challenge of climbing the edTPA “mountain,” teacher candidates may even be more effective and more confident teachers because of their efforts.

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