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# Navigating the Contested Terrain of Teacher Education Policy and Practice: Authors Respond to SCALE

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**Navigating the Contested Terrain of Teacher Education  
Policy and Practice: Authors Respond to SCALE**

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**Abstract:** Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) provided a commentary on the manuscripts in the first part of this special issue, which highlighted the benefits of edTPA and the necessity for such assessment programs to improve teacher education and strengthen teaching practices. In turn, the authors responded to the SCALE commentary. The authors' responses raise concerns about equity, fairness, and unintended consequences of teacher performance assessments. These responses highlight the need for continued dialogue on ways to improve teacher education and strengthen the teaching profession.

**Keywords:** SCALE; edTPA; teacher education; assessment

### **Navegando por el terreno disputado de la política y la práctica de la formación docente: Los autores responden a SCALE**

**Resumen:** Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) ofreció un comentario sobre los manuscritos en la primera parte de esta edición especial, que destacó los beneficios de edTPA y la necesidad de dichos programas de evaluación para mejorar la formación docente y para fortalecer las prácticas docentes. A la vez, los autores respondieron al comentario SCALE. Las respuestas de los autores plantean inquietudes sobre la equidad, la rectitud y las consecuencias involuntarias de las evaluaciones del desempeño docente. Estas respuestas revelan la necesidad de un diálogo continuo sobre las formas de mejorar la formación docente y fortalecer la profesión docente.

**Palabras clave:** SCALE; edTPA; educación docente; evaluación

### **Navegando no terreno disputado da política e prática da formação de professores: Os autores respondem a SCALE**

**Resumo:** Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity Stanford (SCALE) ofereceu um comentário sobre os manuscritos na primeira parte desta edição especial, que destacou os benefícios do edTPA e a necessidade de tais programas de avaliação para melhorar a formação de professores e fortalecer práticas de ensino. Ao mesmo tempo, os autores responderam ao comentário SCALE. As respostas dos autores levantam preocupações sobre equidade, retidão e as conseqüências involuntárias das avaliações de desempenho dos professores. Essas respostas revelam a necessidade de um diálogo contínuo sobre formas de melhorar a formação de professores e fortalecer a profissão docente.

**Palavras-chave:** SCALE; edTPA; educação de professores; avaliação

## **Navigating the Contested Terrain of Teacher Education Policy and Practice: Authors Respond to SCALE**

Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) provided a commentary on the manuscripts in the first part of this special issue, which highlighted the benefits of edTPA and the necessity for such assessment programs to improve teacher education and strengthen teaching practices. In turn, the authors responded to the SCALE commentary. The authors' responses raise concerns about equity, fairness, and unintended consequences of teacher performance assessments. These responses highlight the need for continued dialogue on ways to improve teacher education and strengthen the teaching profession.

### **Henning, Dover, Dotson & Agarwal-Rangath's Response**

In their response to the edTPA critiques contained in this volume, Whittaker, Pecheone & Stansbury (this volume) use oft-cited edTPA rhetoric to frame their argument. They refer to edTPA as "developed by and for the profession" (p. 3), liken it to professionalizing movements in medicine and law, and cite multiple SCALE-authored analyses of its validity. Moreover, although they note they are "consistently combatting" (p. 5) issues related to implementation, they are nevertheless "encouraged that edTPA can be a positive force in the development of teachers" (p. 5).

We do not challenge Whittaker et al.'s claim that teacher performance assessment "can" be a valuable tool within teacher preparation programs. We ourselves have argued as much in other publications (Dover, Schultz, Smith, & Duggan, 2015a, 2015b; Dover & Schultz, 2016). However, our own experience, as well as those documented in the growing external research of edTPA implementation (see our article, this volume, for analysis and citations) indicates that edTPA, as a privately operated, high stakes, and externally scored assessment, does not live up to this potential. Despite our respect for the scholars and faculty who originally developed teacher performance assessments, and for Whittaker et al. themselves, we do not see unrealized potential as sufficient rationale for national policy change. We question the motivation for SCALE and AACTE's relentless edTPA advocacy at the state and university level, and especially the push for high-stakes state-level edTPA implementation prior to comprehensive, external analyses of equity, impact or predictive validity.

Moreover, despite Whittaker et al.'s (this volume) stated willingness to "acknowledge all scholarship examining the consequences of teacher assessment both pro and con" (p. 2), they describe themselves as "perplexed" (p. 4) by the critiques. We find this disingenuous, especially in light of SCALE and AACTE's repeated efforts to control public and scholarly discourse related to edTPA. As scholars, we are troubled by the lack of transparency regarding edTPA processes, and echo other scholars' (Hébert, 2017) concerns about the risks of relying primarily upon self-published internal validity analyses. AACTE and SCALE have been active agents in advancing non-critical analyses of edTPA through the publication of a "review of research" (SCALE, 2015) comprised primarily of internal, unrelated and pro-edTPA research (see Hébert, 2017), the creation of an online edTPA "resource library" that features only pro-edTPA scholarship, and the use of AACTE listservs and social media platforms to publicize pro-edTPA research (Ayers, 2015). This is especially concerning in light of examples of teacher education scholars who have faced professional censure (Madeloni, 2014) or social media trolling (see Ayers, 2015) related to anti-edTPA speech or action. Indeed these are the types of ideological, professional, and personal attacks that inspired our initial submission.

As teacher educators and scholars, we place tremendous value upon academic debate regarding our field. We center inquiry-based and data-driven practice in our programs and classes, and prepare our candidates to do the same. It is with this vision in mind that we offer counternarratives that highlight the complexities and implications of state-mandated teacher performance assessments for diverse stakeholders, including teacher educators, teacher candidates, and the students we collectively serve.

Our scholarship does not seek to engage in the way that many education policy debates play out; a tit-for-tat, in which one side is Wrong, and the other Right. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explained in her famous TED talk, “The Danger of a Single Story”, there is danger in, and always power behind, the retelling of the single story (2009). Our article is intended to highlight the tremendous risk of allowing a single voice, and especially one with a monopoly on institutional or political privilege, to shape education policy. We caution our candidates to avoid teaching in monolithic ways; as a profession, neither should we.

### Clayton’s Response

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the commentary provided by SCALE and particularly to those aspects that relate to my study in this volume and my experience as a teacher educator. I am doing so to promote a scholarly dialogue that moves beyond a dualistic framework that the edTPA is either good or bad; there are more complex realities if we look at how actual candidates experience this assessment and we take seriously the data presented here and elsewhere. I also aim to move beyond a debate that is dismissive of the perspectives of *all* constituencies in the important work of improving teaching and learning, including the candidates themselves who, essentially, are *acted* upon by the policies employing the use of edTPA in particular ways. I offer a few areas of agreement between my own work and the claims made in the SCALE commentary while highlighting a few missed opportunities in the response. Then, I will end with a call for those involved in this debate to listen to each other and to engage in joint problem solving for the promotion of a profession where both context and ideology still matter alongside the important and practical goals of increasing the quality of our programs and candidates.

#### Agreements and Blind Spots

The SCALE commentary begins by citing well-established research (e.g. Sanders & Horn, 1998) that shows that weak teaching quality has particularly deleterious impacts on children over time and especially so for children and youth in the most disadvantaged communities. The quality of teaching and teacher education are certainly matters of equity which animate the study that I offer in this issue. I also agree that some of the challenges raised more recently about edTPA, at least in my research and elsewhere (An, 2017; Behney, 2016; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016; Paine, Beal-Alvarez, & Scheetz, 2016; Ratner & Kolman, 2016), are, indeed, matters of program implementation that concern the perceptions of candidates and teacher educators involved directly with enactment of the assessment.

In spite of these important areas of agreement, the authors’ assumptions reveal some blind spots that inhibit the dialogue. In the first case, the SCALE commentary seems to assert that the development and implementation of teacher performance assessments is “the right and equitable thing to do for parents and students” (Whittaker, Pecheone, & Stansbury, 2018, p. 3). There are, in fact, many “right and equitable” things to do for parents and students to correct years of neglect and open hostility towards educational equity in our systems. However, the claim that TPA’s will correct the kinds of educational injustices alluded to in this commentary is not grounded in evidence

provided by SCALE. In contrast, testimonials and emerging evidence suggest that there may be some differential impacts for immigrant and linguistically diverse candidates (Luna, 2016) and those preparing to work with students particular learning and linguistic needs (Kleyn, Lopez, & Makar, 2015). Teacher educators and multiple media outlets have raised some concerns that the costs of the edTPA are prohibitive for economically disadvantaged students who aspire to teach (Edmundson, 2017). While the evidence is not yet conclusive to satisfy either supporters or critics of the edTPA regarding its impact on educational equity, there is not as clear a line to draw to its positive impacts on equity as the SCALE authors claim. The connection of the edTPA and educational equity is actually, in fact, worthy of investigation. While my own study does not explore this issue in depth, I do share how candidates working with diverse students and in urban contexts raised concerns about the ability of distant scorers who saw such a minimal and carefully crafted piece of their practice could possibly evaluate their potential for teaching. Many also expressed concerns that it would discourage future teacher candidates from learning to teach in the settings and with students where they were most needed. These concerns came unsolicited and directly from candidates, regardless of whether they failed or passed the edTPA with mastery scores.

On the matter of program implementation and candidate perceptions themselves, the SCALE commentary seems to dismiss critiques by suggesting these matters are separate from the validity of the assessment's design. In the course of my qualitative study, I do not question the validity studies commissioned by SCALE and others to assert the content validity of these measures; this assessment certainly represents many of the core tasks of teaching in much better ways than the multiple choice items of past licensure exams. However, validated assessments must also be *meaningful* to the users—in this case, the candidates and teacher educators and supervisors charged with its implementation. Cochran-Smith, Piazza, and Power (2013) offer a framework to examine policy that influenced me and which they also applied in reviewing policies related to teacher performance assessment. Two areas are particularly relevant to my own examination of early implementation of the edTPA in New York which they label as “policy in practice and “impact and implementation” (p. 9). They write that the first addresses “how policies are interpreted and remade in local contexts, especially in terms of individual and collective response, acceptance and resistance, and (un)intended consequences” while the second has to do with “outcomes” especially in terms of their impact on practitioners and “marginalized” groups (p. 9).

Thus, implementation and candidate perceptions matter, even if they may not reflect the intent of the developer. It is not useful keep presenting the intent of the assessment as if that intent remains perfectly preserved when the assessment, enacted through state policy, is implemented. Instead, we also need to be interested in examining the points of disjunctures, not as threats to our core values, but to non-defensively probe them for what they can tell us about where we need to strengthen implementation, alter the assessment, or consider different policies that address those unintended consequences created by the policy itself. To be sure, the policy is not the assessment. Examining candidate and implementation issues can open a dialogue up about how the policies might be altered so that original goals of the assessment can be fully realized.

In my own work, the data suggest that while program alignment and perceived educative benefits of the edTPA increased over the first three semesters of a policy that required edTPA for individual licensure, candidates also reported the persistence and intensification of a mandated and subtractive experience of the edTPA during student teaching. Concrete examples included comments that exhibit a concern about completing the assessment properly and within the timeframe, worries about fulfilling the details of the assessment (i.e. video, template questions, addressing rubric descriptors), and shifting the focus of student teaching lessons on certain subject areas (i.e. literacy, math) in elementary education rather than others (i.e. social studies, science) not

addressed by the edTPA. Many of these examples have been documented in other research (An, 2017; Meuwissen & Chopin, 2017). Candidates' articulation of how the edTPA subtracted from their experience of learning to teach was less precise but still revealing. They said they were so focused on "performance" that they didn't want to take risks or try new strategies for fear of risking failure. Some talked about losing time to plan or work with their mentors in order to devote to writing up lengthy commentaries. One candidate reported that her mentor allowed her to write up her commentaries in the back of the room rather than having her work with her students. To be sure, it was hard for these candidates to articulate what was taken away; they had never student taught before. However, their experience of the edTPA created perceived barriers to their learnings. One candidate who received a mastery score and saw the benefits of the assessment also bemoaned completing this task while student teaching because she felt it took away from the act of translating what she learned about teaching into practice. She wanted more space for educative practice than was possible at the time. Perceptions, because they are owned by individuals, are sometimes vague, ill-defined, and contradictory. I acknowledge as much in my own work as some candidates who spoke most eloquently about their subtractive experiences of the edTPA also discussed ways they had learned more about a particular practice or themselves as teachers. From these data, I concluded that the policy which put high-stakes consequences on individual teacher candidates contributed to these perceptions of the assessment.

These blind spots on the value of candidate perceptions and, ultimately, how implementation of a potentially educative assessment, embedded within a particular policy, may impact the outcomes for teacher education quality and educational equity stifle scholarly discussion. The value of understanding candidates' perceptions is so that the teacher performance assessment realizes its educative intent and aspirations for educational equity more fully. When SCALE authors dismiss these concerns as evidence that institutions and individual teaching candidates are promoting a "compliance orientation" (Whittaker, Pecheone, & Stansbury, 2018, p. 5) over an inquiry mindset, they dismiss critiques and do not help to promote a debate that can, indeed, be a truly educative one.

### **Missed Opportunities: Ideology & Context Matter**

The SCALE commentary also seemed to miss an opportunity to engage deeply with critiques brought up in my piece and others that involve the struggle to implement a teacher performance assessment mandated as a high-stakes policy (An, 2017; Cronenberg, Harrison, Korson, Jones, Murray-Everett, Parrish, & Johnston-Parsons, 2016; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016). A lack of attention, even a dismissive attitude, towards the role of ideology and context unfortunately perpetuate the blind spots that mute scholarly and policy dialogues that could improve policy for teacher candidates and their future students. It is no surprise that this same impulse to consider ideology and context operates in discussions about accountability policies for K-12 schools as well.

The SCALE commentary asserts that there is a "historical perspective" to explain the origins of the edTPA in contrast to a "hypothesis" promoted that edTPA is "a stalking horse for promoting a neo-liberal agenda" (Whittaker, Pecheone, & Stansbury, 2018, p. 2) In the SCALE narrative, the edTPA is the logical result of decades of movement towards teacher quality sanctioned by its most lauded proponents, evidenced by the National Board process which has certified just about 3% of the nation's teachers, and even quoting the AFT that called for a bar exam for the profession. The commentary offers an argument of historical inevitability, with the weakest of professional justifications, rather than engage with the role that ideology may play in the development and promotion of a standardized and commercialized national assessment of performance. In my own piece, I do not cast history and ideology in such stark contrast. I report the history of state, federal,



and professional entities towards an emphasis on outcomes rather than inputs at all levels of education policy, which, others have noted, is as much about ideology as evidence (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001). To understand how both the professionalization and accountability discourses interact to influence the development of teacher performance assessments as educational policy, I consider the ideas of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 2010) and teacher performativity (Ball, 2003). These theoretical perspectives unearth the interests of different supporters and critics of policy moves who ultimately shape the contour of that policy in practice. We can understand and report history while also probing how policies emerge from the clash of different ideologies sometimes beyond our immediate sights. Dismissing these critiques by tagging them as “vague” and “ideological” is good defense but it does little to encourage dialogue that would, in fact, realize the very educative intention that the SCALE authors assert. Educative dialogue – where we might learn how the design works in practice – facilitates a way towards policies that truly can promote educative assessments for the profession.

Another missed opportunity for dialogue results when context is not seriously considered in a discussion of the edTPA. In my study, the issue of context was raised by candidates in two ways. First, some candidates talked about the context of their student teaching experience in a particular school and how that intersected, both positively and sometimes negatively, with their edTPA experience. I reported how the assessment pushed them to do things that they would not otherwise have been required to do with their particular mentor teacher in terms of differentiation and formative assessment. I also represented voices of student teachers who found it difficult to complete the edTPA within a particular classroom context. For example, one candidate reported that his mentor ran a project-based and individualized science classroom where traditional whole and small group instruction was not common; the candidate had to craft a lesson that was artificial in this environment just to complete his edTPA. In other cases, candidates reported focusing on literacy and math to the exclusion of science and social studies because of edTPA demands. I chose to explore these candidate perceptions, not because they are necessarily accurate assessments of the situation but because they are underrepresented in the research on student teaching (Clift & Brady, 2005) and because they tell us something about how the policy is lived by those affected by it. For something to be educative, the users must feel and recognize that it is so, to some degree. It’s unproductive to blame the candidates or the programs, without any deep knowledge of either, when we do see candidates and programs complying with policy mandates while reporting a struggle to maintain a balance with using the assessment to inquire about program practices (Cronenberg et al., 2016; Lachuk & Koellner, 2015; Ratner, 2016). Rather, investigations of policy in practice call for us to interrogate the context that could give rise to such contradictory and conflictual experiences of an assessment, which, by design, is supposed to be beneficial to candidates and the profession.

Moreover, the issue of context is a deeper one than these observations of a mismatch – which we would expect of any assessment implemented at this scale. The SCALE commentary also seems to ignore how the critiques highlight the context of the accountability movement itself in impacting the experience of this assessment by participants. The authors claims that the value of the assessment itself is in its ability to assert a “common standard of practice across all preparation routes...independent of where a candidate is prepared” (Whittaker, Pecheone, & Stansbury, 2018, p. 3). While the rhetoric of edTPA – also reinforced in this commentary and in New York state – has more recently used language of “multiple measures” to soften its position as a high-stakes test, the fact remains that the goals of this assessment, by its developers and its commercial partners, is more than educative but is also to advance a standard of practice that is decontextualized from local settings. The judgments of those working daily with candidates fall outside of the assessment design itself and the context of high-stakes accountability pressures in teacher education and K-12 schools

are irrelevant in that they do not influence the ways participants interpret and approach the assessment. In spite of a nod to context in one part of the reflective commentary of the edTPA, the assessment values distant, anonymous scorers in contrast to local mentors who observe more than 3 days of practice. Thus, ultimately, the assessment values performance over practice where practice means growth and development over time to improve at this critical moment in learning to teach. Thus, SCALE authors see teaching to the test solely as an institutional problem, not a problem of the system – and ideology – in which it is embedded. This is where an inquiry mindset that is curious about ideological influences can inform us about how the context shapes participants' perceptions and, hence, interactions with the assessment itself.

### **A Call for Continued Dialogue**

In the end, we agree on many things just as we can also agree to disagree. Candidates' perceptions, the focus of my study, matter in the implementation of standardized assessments, but so do ideology and the larger context in which a policy on assessment is situated. Many well-intentioned efforts in teaching and teacher education failed because their designers did not consider how these factors changed the intent when it came in touch with the field. Thus, a framework that considers implementation and policy in practice when understanding any educational intervention is critical (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013). The edTPA is more than just a thoughtful assessment that mirrors the tasks of teaching. When it became part of state policies to promote standardization across the profession and contracted with a commercial entity to deliver that standardized assessment nationwide, the edTPA became policy and that requires deeper attention to where such policies came from, who benefits from them, and how they are interacting with diverse users in the field.

I agree most with the SCALE authors that we need longer term studies and qualitative studies that reveal the perceptions of candidates, mentor teachers, and teacher educators over the long term to truly assess the impact on individual teachers' practice and the profession as a whole. Qualitative studies, however, are only valuable if we value perceptions as indicators of how policies play out in context. I expect that impact, over time, to be more nuanced and potentially contradictory than designers expect. Reality is always messy and never clean, but I also expect surprises for myself as well. I remain curious that our profession can move forward to realize goals that are educative for our candidates and equitable for both candidates and students over the long run.

### **Donovan & Cannon's Response**

Whittaker, Pecheone, and Stansbury's response to edTPA critique in this special issue of EPAA raises additional issues for scholars concerned with effects of edTPA in teacher preparation programs. In our reply, we address two of these. First, the authors specifically use our paper, "The University Supervisor, edTPA and the New Making of the Teacher," and cite our data to challenge our conceptions of good teaching. Second, the authors frame their entire argument around their skepticism of critiques of neoliberal policy, referring to such critique as "vague and often ideological" (p. 2).

We wish to connect these two issues in order to strengthen an argument in our paper, as well as others in this special issue of EPAA. It is this: edTPA may well be a model assessment to satisfy one perceived need, for example, the need "for an objective independent assessment of teaching performance embedded in practice as a gateway to teacher licensure, accreditation, and certification" (p. 2). However, if one sees another need, for instance, the need to unpack the discourses that

perpetuate narratives of failing schools and failing teachers while situating schooling as a marketplace activity, then exploring the impacts of policy moves that influence those discourses must be the priority of one's scholarship. Standardized, high-stakes assessments of all sorts fall into this category of policy move. We situate our research within a large network of scholars committed to investigating and analyzing the effects of such policies (Au, 2009, 2016; Berliner, 2005; Hursh, 2007; Granger, 2008; Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016).

Whittaker, Pecheone, and Stansbury argue that edTPA does enable candidates to explore and reflect upon all aspects of good teaching. They make their argument by suggesting we provide inadequate evidence of the opposite claim. They provide several quotations in their argument, one of which is drawn partially from our paper. The full citation is from a co-interview in which one interviewee said, "In practice, I found myself torn between my conceptions of 'good teaching' and my perception of how to support my students to do well on the assessment" (notes from interview of Susan, July 2016). This data helped constitute our self-study's findings. As university supervisors we *did* find ways to trouble the notion of edTPA as subverting the ideals of the student teaching process. As we guided candidates through the edTPA process, we found they needed to focus on how to pass edTPA. However, on reflection we found we used group discussions to help our candidates open up and face aspects of teaching that edTPA did not address, and in this way we prevented edTPA from dominating the entire student teaching process. This led to our recommendation that teacher preparation programs design pedagogical processes that are deliberately edTPA-free spaces.

We agree with the notion that high-stakes assessments should not be used to drive curricular decisions. Whittaker, Pecheone, and Stansbury state they agree with this, too, claiming that edTPA "was purposely designed to focus on providing a support and assessment system with a wide range of tools and resources that help programs avoid compliance-based, high stakes implementation" (p. 4). It is good to learn that SCALE intentionally frontloaded a supply of resources in an effort to prevent programs facing high stress in the implementation process. These resources, however, did not offset the effects of the consequences of the assessment for our students; though our program made sure the resources were fully accessible. As stated in our paper, our students reported having to funnel their experiences of teaching into the form and the rubrics of edTPA. For students like Sasha, who intended to spend her career educating high-needs African American students, the constraints and demands of edTPA were a distraction, because though the assessment has been found theoretically to overlap with a culturally-relevant practices framework (Hyler, 2015), this topic is not among those addressed in the resources that were available at the time Sasha needed them. Though Whittaker, Pecheone, and Stansbury insist it should be otherwise, we struggled to fit the context and needs of learners in Sasha's case into the mold of edTPA.

To frame their argument, Whittaker, Pecheone, and Stansbury claim that our critique of edTPA is founded in loose arguments against the neoliberal policy agenda. They bypass epistemological and paradigmatic differences to claim that if edTPA had been instituted seamlessly on the programmatic level, our teacher preparation programs could have prevented the corruption of our curricula vis à vis teaching to the test. They steer the discussion away from policy analysis and situate issues with edTPA as managerial and operational rather than fundamental and foundational. We understand how edTPA fits along the lineage of the professionalization agenda (Zeichner, 2006), but we also see accountability mandates in education as part of the larger cultural and political shift to neoliberalism, in which the principles of the free market have been applied to public social goods, and in which the potential for democratic decision making in the public sphere has been slowly capitulated to private interests. Robertson (2008) offers an instructive description of the imbrication of the private within the public:

The national state is also deeply implicated in advancing a reconstruction of the public-private divide, including an expansion of the private domain. This transformation has been fuelled by three processes. First, since the early 1980s, we have witnessed an expansion of the private domain as a result of the absorption of state authorities and through the formation of new kinds of private authority. Second, we can observe the formation of new kinds of public-private arrangements that blur the public-private divide.... Third, we can see a change in the character of the private interests that insert themselves into public policymaking, and thereby shape critical components of the content of the public domain. (p. 291).

As educators, we believe it is among our responsibilities to consider the role of the macrostructures of policy when we investigate the specific effects of policy maneuvers on our teaching processes.

In our process of guiding students through edTPA, we were not answering to a local authority, to the local curriculum at our university, to the professors who had designed the program or to anyone within the community who had contributed to designing an assessment specifically to meet the needs of our students or their students. We were answering to a private authority that was shaping the public domain. We understand that state education entities asked for this. We understand that there is data showing some alignment between better outcomes for students and good scores on TPAs. We argue that this is further evidence of the privatization of public educational services, which we see also as a reconstituted and weakened democracy. As we prepare the next generation of educators for entrance into teaching careers, be it under edTPA or not, examining the role of ideologies that influence the adoptions of policy initiatives and fundamentally shape our students' ideas about teaching and learning is our responsibility, and we will remain dedicated to this work.

### **Cross, Dunn, & Dotson's Response to SCALE: Intentions Versus Impact**

Whittaker, Pecheone, and Stansbury's response to the articles in this special issue is both compelling and troubling. While the authors provide important details related the *intent* of their work, we must contend here (again) that we (and others) are primarily concerned with *impact*. Below, we argue three main points as follows: (1) in practice, edTPA *is* contributing to the neoliberal agenda (even if that was not the intent); (2) the way that edTPA is actually being used (as intended or otherwise) *is* SCALE's responsibility, and does not fall exclusively on colleges of education; and (3) the co-opting of social justice language in this response is dangerous. We explore these ideas further below.

Though reading the history of the development of the edTPA was interesting (and may be new to some readers of this special issue), we are decidedly not concerned with how edTPA was designed. We are well aware of this history; in fact, one of us participated in the trial review of the English Language Arts version of the edTPA many years ago. Whether or not we agree with the authors that "the development of edTPA was sparked, not by a neo-liberal agenda, but by a sense of professional responsibility and a long history of performance based assessment that provides actionable evidence for improving teaching and learning" (p. 3) is not our primary concern in this piece (though we do, for the record, still argue that the edTPA was borne out of a neoliberal agenda for professionalization, competition, high-stakes testing, and standardization—please see our article in this issue for more, particularly the section on Neoliberalism and K-12 schooling). Rather, what we ultimately care about (and wrote about) is the impact of this assessment on preservice teachers and teacher educators. We encourage others to make this concern—the *impact* concern—central to

edTPA-focused research and to the work of preparing and supporting new teachers who are being asked to engage in edTPA.

Second, we see the entirety of SCALE's response as placing blame on colleges of education and individual teacher preparation programs for reducing the edTPA's "educative" value to "compliance measures." The authors contend that they are:

consistently combating some programs' tendencies to overemphasize the role of the assessment, lose sight of edTPA within a multiple measures context, yield to the false narrative that you need to 'teach the test' to be successful on the edTPA and compromise program mission and values. (p. 5)

While colleges, programs, and individual teacher educators may have some autonomy in how edTPA is rolled out in their contexts, the programs referenced by SCALE above would not be enacting these practices (or at least in *these particular ways*) if the assessment did not exist in the first place. Given the high-stakes nature of edTPA, we have found that preservice teachers and teacher educators are focused almost exclusively on scores. We therefore question the authors' assertion that "the principal goal is not in the service of higher scores on edTPA" but about "reflecting on one's own teaching context and developing a mindset that understanding one's students matters to what teachers do day to day" (p. 4). The encroachment of neoliberal priorities and practices of universities value measures that quantify—like edTPA—over measures that matter (Levin, 2006) and placing the blame exclusively on colleges of education and teacher educators highlights yet another symptom of increasingly neoliberal tenants—the "cultural trope of individual responsibility" (Wacquant, 2010, p. 213). We contend that the way that this assessment is being used—as compliance over quality—is SCALE's responsibility, and suggest that they, and others, keep Eisner's (2002) words in mind: "not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that is measured matters" (p. 178).

Third—and probably most troubling to us—Whittaker, Pecheone, and Stansbury have co-opted the language of social justice in their response to critics. For example, the authors suggest that the use of teacher performance assessments is the "right and equitable thing to do for parents and students" (p. 3). The authors further state that:

Not only is it a state's right to set professional licensure standards to ensure a common expectation of professional practice, it is their ethical and moral duty to set standards of practice. Licensure standards are set by states routinely for plumbers, bakers, lawyers and doctors and every profession in-between. Moreover, teaching standards should be a civil right for children because the consequences for students who have under-prepared or less competent teachers are grave. (p. 2)

We contend that we are not arguing that teachers should not be licensed; we are arguing, instead, that the methods by which they are licensed, when including EdTPA, are highly problematic. To say that "teaching standards should be a civil right for children" is co-opting the discourse and language of liberatory social justice scholarship in the service of an assessment that is far from just. The authors use this co-opted language to advance neoliberal aims, *even if* those neoliberal aims were not there at the outset. Adding to this, we find that the authors actually take an anti-equity stance throughout their response as they confuse equality with equity. The authors state that, "an external assessment can help teacher preparation programs establish a common standard of practice across all preparation routes that is equitable and comparable and independent of where a candidate is prepared" (p. 3). We argue that it is *not* equitable to give all candidates the same assessment; that is, in fact, the opposite of equity. To assume that all candidates need the exact same preparation and

assessments when they could very well be working in vastly different contexts and communities is to ignore the local funds of knowledge that make teaching most powerful.

We appreciate the suggestions for practices that reduce “compliance” approaches to the edTPA, and we recognize the value in such approaches. We hope that institutions that are required to use edTPA will adopt such structures at the same time that they continue to push back against this requirement. Yet we also find ourselves wondering what, if anything, the SCALE representatives took away from the articles in this special issue and what they continue to take away from ongoing critique of the assessment. In particular, what meaning do they make of the voices of preservice teachers who are highlighted in our and others’ manuscripts? And what are their plans to mediate the negative impact that these students—and future students—face, despite what may have been good intentions? Indeed, as Camus wrote, “Good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence if they lack understanding.” It is understandable that the authors would focus on intentions versus impact; it is difficult work to come to terms with the negative consequences of a decision, especially when one feels like they had good intentions in the first place. Yet we have faith that the good intentions that informed the creation of the edTPA in the first place can also be used to mediate the negative consequences, however unintended.

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