

Impact of the edTPA on teacher candidates' perceptions of preparedness to teach

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Abstract

This case study situated at a private University in the northeastern United States explored the impact of the edTPA assessment and preparation process as an embedded component of the University's educator preparation program. The study tracked 59 graduate level candidates from entry in the program through candidate licensure. The researchers examined the impact of the edTPA preparation process on teacher candidates' *perceptions* of their readiness to teach in comparison to their *actual* readiness to teach as indicated by their edTPA portfolio score. The University's School of Education has 30% ethnic diversity, thus a second research question compared perceptions of readiness to teach of Candidates of Color to those of White peers. Framed by Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, this study contributes to the research on the edTPA as an efficacious and inclusive evaluation tool particularly within diverse schools of education.

Goals

There are two goals and objectives to this project. First, the researchers would like to identify the impact of edTPA preparation within the preparation program on candidates' perceptions of their preparedness to teach in comparison to their actual preparedness to teach as indicated by their edTPA portfolio performance. Secondly, we would like to identify the impact of the edTPA on our candidates of color and their perceptions of preparedness to teach in comparison to their peer Caucasian candidates.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of the edTPA performance assessment on preservice teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach (self-efficacy) versus their actual preparedness as determined by their edTPA score?
2. What is the impact of the edTPA performance assessment on preparedness to teach (self-efficacy) of teacher Candidates of Color relative to White candidates as indicated by their edTPA scores?

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Methodology

This case study followed one cohort of graduate level initial licensure candidates from entry to exit and licensure. The cohort consisted of 119 candidates beginning the teacher preparation program in the fall of 2019. Out of those candidates, 74 agreed to participate in the study; yet only 59 completed the program due to the challenges of COVID 19.

Data Collection

For research question one, the data collection used voluntary pre and post edTPA Efficacy Survey of the teacher candidates' knowledge and skills regarding the edTPA preparation and their perceived efficacy in preparedness to teach. The electronic 26 question survey was done using LiveText, an external learning platform. Candidates were asked to rate their self-efficacy teaching confidence levels on a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 1-not at all confident, 2-slightly confident, 3-moderately confident, 4-pretty confident, and 5-extremely confident. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Teacher candidates' final edTPA portfolio scores, identified only as pass or not pass. The candidate scores were analyzed with the post survey and the focus group response themes in order to enrich the narrative findings. The pre and post survey data were filtered to compare the responses of the candidates of color to the Caucasian candidates. In addition, the edTPA scores were also filtered in the same manner for analysis.

Literature Review

The concern regarding the preparation of highly qualified teachers for P-12 schools has been at the forefront in the minds of the public and education policy makers (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The Bush and Obama administrations both implemented federal legislation geared toward improving teacher preparation. These initiatives were part of a national focus aimed at raising the bar for teacher preparation and creating a national standard that would increase professionalization (Burns et al., 2015; Sato, 2014). Historically, in the U.S., each state delineates its own teaching certification requirements that serve as a gatekeeper for teacher licensure. The federal reforms instigated a movement for performance-based assessments aligned to national standards that would evaluate teacher candidates for initial teaching certification, and provide states with a standardized and nationally-available tool (Pechone & Whittaker, 2016). As a result, many states have turned to SCALE's Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). In the fall of 2018 the state wherein this study is situated, adopted and mandated the edTPA assessment as a new requirement for teacher certification. The assessment has been developing into "one of the more polarizing education initiatives of the early twenty-first century" (Petchauer et al., 2018, p.325)

References

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Key Findings:

RQ1: Data for research question one revealed:

- EPP was a key factor in building candidates' overall confidence
- Candidates felt confident and prepared to teach in 1) Knowledge & skills 2) Pedagogical knowledge and 3) establishing a positive learning environment.
- Candidates had 93% pass rate on the edTPA portfolio

RQ2: Data for research questions two revealed:

- No significant difference in candidates of color perceptions of preparedness to teach or passing rates between the two groups.
- Candidates of color had somewhat higher efficacy perceptions than White peers

Conclusions

- ✓ **quality of the coursework** within EPP & the variation of instructional practices related to edTPA preparation built confidence & successful candidates
- ✓ enhanced **understanding of effective instructional strategies & reflection** for personal and professional growth
- ✓ the perspective of candidates of color in this study indicate that when an educator preparation program embodies a **commitment to candidate success via caring and committed faculty and supportive programming** aligned to edTPA and student-centered best practices, candidates will be successful regardless of ethnicity

Contributions to the Field of Education

- ✓ This study's reinforces SCALE's (2019) claim that the edTPA is an educative assessment that fully prepares candidates for the classroom and evaluates them on their ability to implement successful teaching practices.
- ✓ This study provides a voice for Candidates of Color who reveal a contrasting perspective than what is widely reported in the literature. Namely, that they are performing equally as well as their peers when receiving the benefits of a supportive and comprehensive preparation program.