

Book Review

Evaluating Teacher Education Programs through Performance-based Assessments

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Evaluating Teacher Education Programs through Performance-Based Assessments

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INTRODUCTION

A flurry of research studies and book chapters published in recent years outlined the development and testing of “high-leverage practices” for teacher candidates (e.g. Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Ball, Sleep, Boerst & Bass, 2009; Forzani, 2014; Lachuk & Koellner, 2015). The book is amongst one of the richest and most comprehensive resources of its kind. A total of 22 chapters covered in the book are thematically broken up into three sections, namely “The Role of Faculty and Institutions in Implementing Performance-Based Assessments”, “Supporting Teacher Education Candidates’ Work with Performance-Based Assessments” and “Programs and Initiatives Related to Performance-Based Assessments”. Much of this information appears in this well-structured and well-documented book focuses on improving the performance of the next generation of teachers and the evolution of teacher education through performance-based assessment.

The first eight chapters grouped into Section One, as the title implied, focus explicitly on how edTPA, as a high-stake teacher assessment, leads to multiplex issues in relation to planning, adopting and implementing of program initiatives. Beginning with a conceptual model proposed in Chapter 1 for meaningful integrations of edTPA and high leverage practices into existing courses, Chapter 2 is followed as a coalition of issues triggered by the planning, adoption and implementation efforts of multiple performance-based measures to evaluate teacher readiness, including the concerns over key stakeholders’ knowledge and understanding of such implementation, faculty buy-in and professional development, timeline, program variability, artifacts in comparison with evidences collected to reflect on summative assessments. To snapshot the changing landscape of teacher preparation programs, Chapters 4 and 5 detail the delineation of transformative changes through teacher performance data and faculty dialogue, and the adoption of a data-driven approach to improve teacher preparation in response to challenges that may arise, such as pressure for program accountability, time-consuming efforts to complete authentic tasks, to name a few. The engagement of multiple stakeholders (educators,

parents, mentors, supervisors) in program initiation and evaluation are depicted in Chapters 6 and 7, followed by a detailed account of edTPA's content validity in Chapter 8, specifying rubrics for assessing teacher candidates' ability to use academic language and representation as part of the subject-specific pedagogy.

Section Two, consisting of seven chapters, is devoted to studying different initiatives of learn-to-teach frameworks and models that have made edTPA's tasks embodied in them to support teacher candidates' professional growth and development. Chapter 9 is a detailed presentation of an elementary education teacher preparation program's undertaking on supporting teacher candidates to complete Task 1 of the edTPA project. In an interdisciplinary manner, the task of Planning for Instruction and Assessment was scrutinized into coursework to ensure that teacher candidates have exposure to the planning, teaching, and/or assessment in response to this mandate intoned with knowledge-for-practice in authentic settings. Chapter 10 focuses on the effectiveness of the edTPA support structure explored in light of pre-service teachers' perceptions and opinions via mixed method interactive program evaluation. The edTPA support structure is suggested to bear implications for future research and practices in monitoring and supporting teacher preparation. The urgent need for authenticity translated into performance-based, content-specific assessment process for English teachers and students constitutes the foundation of a capstone project presented in Chapter 11. *LinguaFolio*®, a portfolio-based formative assessment, was used to scaffold students' personal language learning history and experiences by engaging both students and teachers who are also learners in multiple modes of communication for self-reflection on and self-evaluation of teaching progression and ongoing pedagogical improvement.

Chapter 12, coupled with Chapter 13, provides a thorough and comprehensive examination of challenges encountered by teacher candidates and formative supports considered to be effective to foster teacher learning. The details of challenges of edTPA, or the underlying concepts that are unlikely to be comprehended, include learning the language that are typically not associated with conversational use, the complexity of guidelines, rules, and constraints of the test, and specific digital literacy skills needed for edTPA. Substantial supports needed are outlined for teacher candidates in preparing for their edTPA project. Chapter 13 focuses on a pilot of edTPA supports in a university for ESL and foreign language teacher candidates to emulate practices throughout the licensure process. Chapters 14 and 15 illustrate the process of creating school-university partnerships working collectively to foster intensive clinical and authentic learning experiences through embedding standardized sets of core performance into formative activities and summative assessments. To conclude this section, Chapter 15 looks into identifiable issues that arise from cases of literacy-based classroom partnerships and strategies for anchoring student outcomes and sustaining school-university partnerships.

The seven chapters (Chapters 16 to 22) grouped into Section Three bring the readers a full spectrum of programs and initiatives developed in response to the paradigm shift towards performance-based tasks to assess teacher candidates' readiness to teach. The remainder of this book proceeds as follows: Built on an extensive literature review, Chapter 16 structures a framework termed the Performance Assessment Circle that links experiential learning and performance-based assessment for further investigations by case studies to synthesize teacher candidates' distinct perceptions of experiential learning for follow-on research and practices. The following two chapters switch attentions to impacts of adapting collaborative teaching mechanism and inquiry to support and study pre-service and in-service teacher development. In Chapter 17, the author introduces the Japanese Lesson Study Model (JLSM) which incorporates the three components of collaborative lesson planning, lesson delivery and lessons discussed by collaborative teams of teachers, followed by Chapter 18 using a longitudinal study on collaborative video-based action research project for assessing, changing, and monitoring continuous performance improvement of pre- and in-service teachers. The aforementioned collaborative efforts have the potential to extend their implications to a variety of intern teacher courses and in-service teachers' professional development.

Chapter 19 is concerned with an evaluation scheme broken down into the four areas of planning, evaluation, use of ICT competences, didactics, and research based on which proficiency levels of initial training of teachers in Mexico are assessed. The chapter further lends supports to previous studies ascertaining the critical importance of engaging future teachers in the four areas of training. Ample attention has been given to the cultivation of teachers' research-based teaching ability in Chapters 19 and 20. As the instance of utilizing Student Learning (ISL) projects described in Chapter 20, developing research experiences is claimed to be an integral process leading to high-leverage preparation for classroom practices. In Chapter 21, the authors attempt to address the central issue about correlations and differences between preschool teachers' and students' general attitudes toward performance-based assessment and its documentation. Results yielded by the central inquiry would shed light on policy changes and practice reform to develop and retain high quality teachers in the Croatian Pre-school system. Chapter 22, which is the last chapter of the collection, looks into teacher quality as determinants on student achievement, with particular emphasis on the effects of teacher training, teaching experience, pedagogical practices, and professional development experiences identifies as key factors bridging the achievement gap in mathematics. Avenues and suggestions for teacher intervention strategies are proposed in light of the chapter's quantitative undertaking.

As a common pursuit for all teacher education programs, licensure requirements as a pedantic discipline have entailed a sophisticated body of theory and applied knowledge. Teacher qualifications, therefore, are vital to keep in mind as teacher education programs seek to improve and sustain their practice. This book well documented continuous improvement efforts and implementations of a diversity of program initiatives to deal with numerous challenges arising from edTPA and alternative forms of performance-based evaluations for teacher readiness. Questions have been raised as to what constitutes the broad picture of good teaching, as well as whether the constant bombardment of educational initiatives are all grounded into practices? Performance-based assessment for teachers, as a driving force for reframing the landscape of pre- and in-service teachers' professional development, is advancing our knowledge about what worth learning for a beginning teacher. Nonetheless, as Fullan maintained, most attempts at educational changes still largely overlook the importance of initiating strategic plans that can sustain implementation efforts towards institutionalization (Fullan, 2007). On-going and longitudinal investigations on performance-based assessments, together with their impacts on teacher preparation and student outcomes, are needed for substantially improving and monitoring the implementation results until the intended endeavors discussed in the book are reasonably institutionalized.

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