Chapter 11
Using the edTPA as a Formative and Summative Assessment Tool

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ABSTRACT

The education profession demands a great deal of our entry level “employees.” The edTPA was developed as a performance assessment that evaluates the readiness of beginning teachers to meet these high demands. On a broader scale, the information from the edTPA can be used by educator preparation programs (EPPs) to evaluate their curriculum and practice to ensure that they are adequately preparing beginning teachers for the rigors of the classroom. This chapter will discuss the formative and summative assessment possibilities that the edTPA provides for both candidates and EPPs. This summative assessment can take on a formative role for the preservice educator within their program of study prior to student teaching. The summative data can also be used by the EPPs to identify gaps in candidate knowledge. A case study of one EPP’s use of the edTPA as a diagnostic tool for programmatic improvement will be discussed. This chapter will also discuss changes made to the program and specific courses in order to more fully support teacher candidates in the development of their edTPA portfolios.

INTRODUCTION

The education profession demands a great deal of our entry level “employees”. Lortie (2002) points out that beginning teachers are invested with tremendous responsibility from day one for all aspects of their classroom, and in many other ways are treated no differently than teachers with decades of experience. Stanford University and AACTE developed a partnership and developed an assessment of beginning teachers that has become known as the edTPA as a method of evaluating the readiness of beginning teachers to meet these high demands. The edTPA is described as a multiple-measure assessment process used to evaluate student teachers. The data from this assessment can be used to help evaluate the skill

level of the student teacher as he/she enters the profession. On a broader scale the information from the edTPA can be used by educator preparation programs (EPPs) to evaluate their curriculum and practice to ensure that they are adequately preparing beginning teachers for the rigors of the classroom, particularly with regard to lesson planning, use of assessment results, and differentiating instruction.

This chapter will discuss the formative and summative assessment possibilities that the edTPA provides for both candidates and EPPs. This summative assessment can take on a formative role for the preservice educator within their program study prior to student teaching. Teacher candidates can also use the feedback that they receive from this summative assessment to guide their development as they transition into the induction phase of their career as an educator. The summative data can also be used by the EPPs as they identify gaps in candidate knowledge that need to be addressed in their courses. A case study of one EPP’s use of the edTPA as a diagnostic tool for programmatic improvement will be discussed. This chapter will also discuss changes made to the program and specific courses in order to more fully support teacher candidates in the development of their edTPA portfolios.

WHAT IS THE edTPA?

The edTPA is a comprehensive portfolio assessment that requires preservice teachers to document that they have the knowledge and skills required to help all students learn in real classrooms. This is a change from teacher certification examinations that are based on content, pedagogy, and knowledge of students, but were not contextualized in a real classroom setting. This performance assessment has gained acceptance in part as a response to the regular attempts by policy makers to regulate the quality of teacher education programs, even treating “teacher education as a punching bag, painting those in the entire field as having low standards and being unwilling to accept the quality of their work” (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

The edTPA was developed by Stanford University (specifically the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity, or SCALE) in cooperation with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). The assessment was developed and field tested nationally with the hopes of improving preservice preparation and demonstrating rigor in the initial licensure process. The need for such an assessment is demonstrated by a 2011 survey by the National Center for Education Information that found that less than half of all beginning teachers identified themselves as “very competent” when they entered the classroom (Feistritzer, 2011). The edTPA was nationally validated in 2013 after 2 years of field testing with over 12,000 teacher candidates, making the edTPA the first standards-based assessment of teacher candidate performance to be available nationally (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2017). The edTPA is currently in use in 38 states and the District of Columbia. By the end of 2017 over 100,000 portfolios will have been scored since the operational launch in 2013.

THE edTPA AS A SUMMATIVE TOOL

The edTPA is clearly a summative assessment of a student teacher’s ability to enter their own classroom and successfully teach students. As of the fall of 2016, 16 states have made the edTPA consequential for licensure or are actively considering its use, making this not only a summative assessment of a candidate’s preparation for the classroom but also a high-stakes gateway into the profession (American Association