

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ACCREDITATION, ASSESSMENT,  
AND PROGRAM EVALUATION RESEARCH IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION

# Implementing *and* Analyzing Performance Assessments *in* Teacher Education



*edited by*

Joyce E. Many | Ruchi Bhatnagar

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A volume in  
*Contemporary Issues in Accreditation, Assessment, and Program  
Evaluation Research in Educator Preparation*  
Joyce E. Many, *Series Editor*

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INFORMATION AGE PUBLISHING, INC.  
Charlotte, NC • [www.infoagepub.com](http://www.infoagepub.com)

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A CIP record for this book is available from the Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov>

ISBN: 978-1-64113-119-3 (Paperback)  
978-1-64113-120-9 (Hardcover)  
978-1-64113-121-6 (ebook)

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Printed in the United States of America

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# INTRODUCTION

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The field of teacher education has long relied on locally-developed assessments to evaluate preservice teachers' ability to teach and to gather data for program improvement. Such measures, however, have come under increasing levels of critique from public stakeholders and from some teacher educators for lacking both reliability and validity (Castle & Shaklee, 2006; Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, & Ronfeldt, 2008). In response to concerns, rigorous performance-based assessments for preservice teachers have been advanced as one possible way to ensure that all students receive instruction from a high-quality teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Towards that end, both state and national teacher performance assessments, focusing on the application of knowledge of teaching and learning in a classroom setting, have been developed (Wei & Pecheone, 2010). As these assessments have been implemented, important issues have been raised by teacher educators and others with respect to (a) whether such performance assessments should be used for high-stakes purposes in relation to certification or for program approval, (b) the degree to which the voices of teacher educators have played a role in policy development or implementation decisions, and (c) perceptions of the impact of the use of such assessments on the learning and development of preservice teachers and program improvement.

Our book explores factors related to the implementation of teacher performance assessments in varying state and institutional contexts. The contributors, teacher educators from across the country, focus on what was learned from inquiries conducted using diverse methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, self-studies, and mixed methods). Their research encompassed faculty, supervisors, cooperating teachers, and students' perceptions and concerns of teacher performance assessments, case studies of curricular reform and/or resistance, analyses of experiences and needs as a result of the adoption of such assessments, and examinations of the results of program alignment and reform. The chapters showcase experiences which occurred during high-stakes situations, in implementation periods prior to high-stakes adoption, and in contexts where programs adopted performance assessments as an institutional policy rather than as a result of a state-wide mandate.

In Chapter 1, "The Evolution of Teacher Performance Assessments As a Measure of Accountability," Carla Tanguay provides a description of the historical and socio-political context which led to the emergence of teacher performance assessments. Next, she leads the reader through a delineation of the development, content, and use of specific portfolio-based assessments in teacher education, including the Performance Assessment of California Teachers (PACT), the edTPA<sup>®</sup>, the Praxis Performance Assessment of Teachers (PPAT), and others. Finally, she presents tensions surrounding the use of teacher performance assessments including (a) whether promotion of performance assessments leads to a common language for the teacher education field or a narrowing of the curriculum, (b) alignments or tensions between assessments with program identities or faculty perspectives on teaching and learning, and (c) the degree to which cultures of inquiry, compliance, or resistance develop as faculty are pressured to use data to drive decision-making.

The notion of how a culture within faculty groups can be positively impacted as individuals work together to implement teacher performance assessments is explored in Chapter 2, "From Isolation to a Community of Practice: Redefining the Relationship of Faculty and Adjunct University Supervisors During the Implementation of edTPA." Using a phenomenological approach, Sharilyn Steadman and Ellen Dobson examine how the creation of new structures and communication pathways instituted for the implementation of edTPA led to a dissolution of the hegemonic relationships that had become the norm between adjunct supervisors and tenured and tenure-track faculty. Educators from both roles moved from working in isolation to functioning as a cohesive group as they strove to unpack, understand, and implement the new performance assessment. In contrast to the setting in Chapter 2, where the authors' institution made the decision to move to a performance-based assessment without a state mandate,

the story told in Chapter 3, “Faculty Investment in Student Success: A Four-Year Investigation of edTPA Implementation” occurs in a context where state policy changes resulted in the adoption of edTPA as a high-stakes assessment with a very short timeline for implementation. Grounding their work in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM; Hall & Hord, 2015), Gaoyin Qian, Harriet Fayne, and Leslie Lieman focus on how college faculty and their administrative leadership team worked through phases of (a) preparation, (b) exploration, and (c) acculturation in response to the externally mandated performance assessment. They use the term *covert leadership* (Mintzberg, 1998) to emphasize the importance of adopting an administrative approach which motivates, supports, and coordinates faculty activities rather than handling the implementation process through institutional directives. Qian and colleagues draw on the results of three studies conducted over four years to understand how the dimensions of the professional learning community they developed aligned with faculty’s efforts to move from teacher-centered to student-centered concerns and to engage in implementation activities which supported students’ performance.

The importance of establishing a professional learning community approach is further delineated by Holley Roberts in Chapter 4, “Mandates Revisited: One Coordinator’s Story of Cultivating Collegiality and Inquiry Through a Professional Learning Community.” Having been thrust into a leadership role as a newly minted edTPA coordinator, Roberts shares a personal narrative of the processes she and her faculty went through to respond to her state’s reform efforts encouraged by adoption of edTPA as a certification requirement. Her chapter details the progression which occurred as faculty moved first from focusing on personal, philosophical, and political stances toward the mandate, to then becoming concerned about logistics surrounding implementation, and finally to collectively interpreting data and sharing experiences. She positions her action research as a way to understand how promoting an intellectual inquiry stance in a professional learning community can be an effective response to implementing mandates.

In Chapter 5, “The Power of Supports to Improve edTPA Outcomes,” Kathleen Fabricant, Cynthia Bolton, Cindy York, and Angie Hodge turn the focus to how faculty grappled with developing and sustaining effective scaffolds that support candidates’ ability to be successful on their state’s high-stakes performance assessment. Looking back over time, they describe the range of supports which were developed at their institution and explain how they used data from faculty, students, and cooperating teachers to analyze their effectiveness. Their chapter addresses their growing awareness of the value of program-level foundational supports which provide the content-specific mentoring that college-level supports can lack and the

difficulty of sustaining scaffolds that require extensive out-of-course support by content-faculty experts.

The development of candidate expertise in one particular content area, elementary mathematics, is the emphasis in Chapter 6, “An Exploration of Elementary Teacher Candidates’ Preparation for edTPA Mathematics Assessment Task 4.” The authors, Susan Swars Auslander, Stephanie Z. Smith, and Marvin E. Smith, work with preservice elementary teachers to develop high-level teaching practices which use children’s cognition to guide instruction. The authors begin by introducing their two-course, elementary mathematics methods sequence and the elements related to edTPA Math Task 4 embedded in those courses to help guide candidates attention to children’s conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and problem solving and reasoning. Next, they discuss the results from a mixed-methods study designed to investigate the extent to which course experiences led to a change in preservice teachers’ mathematical beliefs, and participants’ perspectives on engaging in an edTPA Math Task 4 while in the courses. In contrast to the authors’ research in years prior to the inclusion of edTPA Task 4 (Smith, Swars, Smith, Hart, & Haardoerfer, 2012; Swars, Hart, Smith, Smith, & Tolar, 2007; Swars, Smith, Smith, & Hart, 2009; Swars, Smith, Smith, Carothers, & Myers, 2016), the participants in this study did not demonstrate changes in their mathematical beliefs. The authors draw on their qualitative data to explore how struggles and issues related to completion of the edTPA may have filtered their learning and expected changes in beliefs.

Understanding the role performance assessments may play in shaping candidates’ learning and reflection is the subject of the next two chapters in this volume as well. In Chapter 7, “Not Just For Preservice Teachers: edTPA as a Tool for Practicing Teachers and Induction Support,” John Seelke and Xiaoyang Gong turn their attention to the potential of the performance assessments to extend beyond being a summative evaluation to serve as a bridge to supporting novice teachers during induction. At their institution, which is not mandated to use edTPA, K–12 partners have historically been involved in local evaluation of their candidates’ portfolios. Research on alumni, mentoring teachers, and K–12 colleagues involved in local scoring indicate (a) edTPA promotes critical reflection, (b) divergent views on whether respondents see edTPA as connecting to teaching practices in schools, (c) alignment of edTPA and core pedagogical practices, (d) challenges evident in implementing edTPA due to school environments, and (e) beliefs that even practicing teachers benefit from edTPA.

The potential impact of performance assessments on learning and development of educators continues in Chapter 8, “Forcing Me to Reflect: Preservice and Novice Teachers’ Reflective Thinking in Varied School Contexts.” Dianna Terrell, Kathy McCurdy, Megan Birch, Tom Schram, and

Page Tompkins focus their attention on the effect of a different performance assessment, the New Hampshire Teacher Candidate Assessment of Performance (NH-TCAP) on teachers' pedagogical reflection. The authors argue that reflective thinking, which is a requirement in performance assessments, needs careful operationalization and research to understand its transferability and effects on classroom practice. Using Larivee's typology of reflection (2008), Terrell and colleagues analyze the types of reflection evident both (a) in the teacher-candidates' NH-TCAP reflective thinking tasks and (b) in their teaching performance after they were hired in their initial teaching positions. Case-studies of first-year teachers who graduated from different programs are used to illustrate commonalities and differences in patterns of reflections and how these may have been shaped by the nature of reflections called for by the NH-TCAP. Finally, the authors use document analysis of the NH-TCAP to substantiate their contention that the assessment promotes both surface and pedagogical reflection but that there is little explicit prompting for critical reflection on social or systemic factors that might impact student learning.

Like the performance assessment developed for state-specific use that is highlighted in the previous chapter, Chapter 9, "State Education Agency Use of Teacher Candidate Performance Assessments: An Overview and a Case study of a Statewide Portfolio-Based Assessment System in Kansas," addresses the development of a performance-based assessment for Kansas. Authors Stephen Meyer, Emma Espel, and Nikkolas Nelson describe the creation and use of the Kansas Performance Teaching Portfolio (KPTP) including its history as an assessment for practicing teachers and the assessment's evolution into an evaluation used for initial teacher preparation program completion. In addition to detailing the content and structure of the assessment, the authors explore a data analysis tool developed to aid KPTP implementation and improvement. Reflections on lessons learned are offered to other agencies embarking on development of statewide performance assessments, including ways to leverage partnerships after development and implementation as thoughts turn to systemic improvement and effective data use.

Chapter 10, "Using the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) As a Framework to Understand and Support edTPA Coordinators and Faculty During the Implementation Process," continues in the vein of understanding and learning from state-wide implementation of teacher performance assessments. Joyce Many, Shaneeka Favors-Welch, Karen Kurz, Tamra Ogletree, and Clarice Thomas are members of Georgia's Teacher Education Research Consortium. Drawing on two state-wide studies, the authors illustrate how the CBAM (Hall & Hord, 2015) can be used to understand faculty and edTPA coordinators' concerns about implementing a performance assessment such as edTPA and how these concerns may relate to the degree to which they integrate edTPA activities. Their chapter underscores the need

to recognize the complexity of the changes called for when responding to implementation of a performance assessment as a high-stakes assessment and how to support faculty engagement during the change process.

As illustrated by the work of the contributors to this book, in the last decade the field of teacher education has experienced a surge in the use of teacher performance assessments. The movement has resulted in both significant curricula reform and professional development and also immense anxiety, angst, and concerns over the impact on teacher-education programs and their content, the challenges of implementation, and the perceived loss of academic freedom for the teacher educators. As the chapters outline, implementation of such assessments, whether state developed or available from a national provider, is extremely complex for the stakeholders involved. The stories shared in these 10 chapters provide the readers an in-depth account of the range of issues teacher educators encounter while trying to implement preservice teacher performance assessments. While the content of these performance assessments and the stakes associated with the implementation varied across the contexts, the issue of choice and the inclusion of voice emerged as key variables shaping the success of implementation and the extent of faculty engagement and willingness to adopt change. These factors were foundational to the following implications of the research described within these chapters:

- The importance of providing teacher-education faculty opportunities for open discussions, for sharing concerns, and for taking an active role in decisions about the changes needed in their curricula, assessments, and program design.
- The benefits of shared leadership in institutions and the creation of professional learning communities to overcome resistance and increase collaboration.
- The opportunity to create new collaborative relationships between faculty and supervisors, challenging the old hegemonic power status.
- The potential of involving P–12 partners and connecting the preservice performance assessments to induction.
- The opportunity to analyze the merit of assessments by reflecting on preservice teachers' data to evaluate whether the assessment elicits reflection in areas such as social justice and equity, and whether the assessment is educative and impacts beliefs of preservice teachers in significant ways.

For readers involved in the stages of initial implementation in response to adoption of teacher performance assessments, these issues are worthy of careful attention. By providing a research-based understanding of how performance assessments may affect preservice-teacher learning, program

improvement, and faculty motivation, our intent is to support the field in considering how educators may thoughtfully balance state-wide policies, teacher accountability, and program values as they work to implement assessments that provide meaningful data for program improvement and teacher development.

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