



Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of the California Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA)

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Research has consistently shown that an effective teacher has the single greatest impact on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Dain, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Therefore it is essential that state policy makers and university decision makers develop and implement assessments that reliably identify effective teachers. Because traditional paper-and-pencil tests of content knowledge do not assess teaching performance, policy makers in California mandated the teaching performance assessment (TPA) system. The TPA was introduced in California in 2004 with programs piloting it and then became mandatory for candidates enrolling in preliminary programs in 2008. This study is the first to

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explore the experiences of candidates who were required to pass a TPA to earn a teaching license.

The TPA seeks to measure the knowledge, skills, and competencies of teachers during the credential phase of their training. This assessment allows credentialing agencies to gain some insight into the potential effectiveness of teacher candidates. Teacher education programs have used course grades, fieldwork experiences, and clinical practice performance to determine candidate readiness for their own classrooms for almost a century. Recent legislation in many states, however, requires that candidates pass a standardized summative assessment of teaching performance to earn their teaching credentials (Stanford Center for Assessment Learning and Equity [SCALE], 2015). Although California has multiple years of implementation with three approved TPA models, and despite the recent advent of edTPA as a national-level teaching performance assessment, many question whether the TPAs have value. This is especially important for credentialing agencies, which may use the data to emphasize, measure, and support the skills and knowledge that all teachers need from their first day in the classroom. This article describes the various models of TPAs and examines the perceived value of TPAs from the perspective of newly employed teachers in California.

Multiple Models for Teaching Performance Assessment

At the turn of the 21st century, both federal and state K–12 education improvement efforts proposed sweeping changes in teacher assessment. During this time, states relied on written licensure tests to document readiness for K–12 classrooms. California took the lead in developing preservice TPA with Senate Bill 2042 (California Department of Education, 2008), mandating that all teacher education programs require a summative assessment of teaching performance as part of preservice teacher preparation. In addition, this assessment was mandatory for all multiple-subject (elementary) and single-subject (secondary) teacher candidates entering California preliminary credential programs after July 1, 2008, and had to be aligned with the Teaching Performance Expectations (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2013a). The TPA models required a candidate to complete defined tasks relating to subject-specific pedagogy, designing and implementing instruction, student assessment, and a culminating teaching experience.

The first assessment, known as the California Teaching Performance Assessment (CalTPA; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2013b), was designed by the Educational Testing Service at the request of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). Teacher educators at Fresno State University developed the second assessment, the Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers (FAST). FAST is the only locally designed performance assessment approved by CCTC (Torgerson, Macy, Beare, & Tanner, 2009). The third commission-approved performance assessment, the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT; 2013), was developed

by a consortium of teacher education programs led by teacher educators at Stanford University. According to Pecheone and Chung (2006),

many teacher educators at these campuses were dissatisfied by the content and format of the state's teacher performance assessment [CalTPA], which was designed as a generic assessment that applies across all grade levels and subject areas. Specifically, the [CalTPA] teacher performance assessment was developed as four separate and discrete performance tasks that are designed to be embedded in college or university preparation program courses. (p. 22)

All three formats of the California TPA assessments require trained assessors to rate candidates' performance using scoring rubrics that describe the level of performance in each of the required tasks (e.g., planning, instruction, assessment), culminating in a total score. Each model must also meet and maintain specified standards of assessment reliability, validity, and fairness to candidates. For example, CalTPA requires assessors to participate in an initial 1-day overall training followed by 2 days of training for each of the four TPA tasks. Assessors must be recalibrated every 6 months. After an institution has implemented the TPA using any of the three models, it must double score a sample of 15% of scores. If the double scores do not match each other, then the campus TPA coordinator is required to review the scores and determine a final score. In addition, all candidates receiving a nonpassing score from one assessor are also double scored.

California institutions using PACT have teacher education candidates complete the assessment toward the end of the program, when they are immersed in student teaching. The PACT assessment is a 3- to 5-day unit of instruction that includes lesson plans, video of instruction, and three representative samples of student work. The PACT is subject specific to the candidates' area of preparation and is divided into five tasks: context, planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection. Candidates receive a PACT handbook that describes the assessment and required artifacts, with guiding questions used to write a commentary for each task.

Twelve rubrics describing the four performance levels for each criterion are also given to candidates. The rubrics are developmental in nature, with an expectation of a Level 2 score to demonstrate proficiency to enter the teaching profession. There are three rubrics on planning: "Establishing a Balanced Instruction Focus," "Making Content Accessible," and "Designing Assessments." They are used to assess the lesson plans and planning commentary. The two instruction rubrics, "Engaging Students in Learning" and "Monitoring Student Learning During Instruction," are used to assess the teaching videos and instruction commentary. Three rubrics measure teaching performance on Assessment: "Analyzing Student Work From an Assessment," "Using Assessment to Inform Teaching," and "Using Feedback to Promote Student Learning." For the assessment task, candidates share their own assessment rubric, an overview of class learning during the teaching event, and three representative samples of student work, one of which should be an English language learner. The two reflection rubrics, "Monitoring Student Progress" and

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“Reflecting on Learning,” examine daily reflections provided by the candidate and reflection commentary. Finally, two rubrics measure candidate proficiency in developing their students’ academic language: “Understanding Language Demands” and “Developing Students’ Academic Language Repertoire.” These rubrics measure teaching performance across the context, planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection tasks. There is no rubric for the context task.

Research articles and presentations at national conferences about PACT in California, and the growing demand for a national TPA, led to the formation of the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE, 2013) and the edTPA (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The edTPA has been adopted by many educator preparation programs across the country and is required by many states for certification (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2014; Sato, 2014). Although Stanford University is the exclusive author and owner of the edTPA, the design and review team comprises more than 100 university faculty, national subject-matter representatives, and K–12 teachers.

Building and refining on the work of the PACT consortium, the edTPA has three tasks: planning, instruction, and assessment. Each task has five rubrics. Aspects of the PACT content and rubrics are embedded into each of the three edTPA tasks. For example, the context task in PACT is embedded into the planning task on the edTPA. It provides student demographic information of the classroom and school. The instruction task requires candidates to video subject-specific pedagogical approaches and integrates the recently adopted Common Core Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. The assessment task is very similar to PACT, with candidates submitting three representative samples of student work from one assessment in the teaching event. The reflection and academic language rubrics in PACT are embedded into all three of the edTPA tasks. Finally, the edTPA rubrics are scored on a 5-point scale to describe a greater range of teaching performance. States determine a minimum cumulative passing score.

Purpose and Development of the Study

In 2011–2012, the CCTC convened a Teacher Advisory Panel, consisting of teachers, administrators, education faculty, and community stakeholders, to make recommendations regarding the direction of credentialing programs. One subgroup of the Teacher Advisory Panel reviewed the literature (i.e., *Greatness by Design*) and surveyed stakeholders of TPAs to discuss the value of TPA from the perspective of the candidate. The purpose of the present study was to examine newly employed teachers’ perceptions of the value of TPAs. The following research questions guided the research:

1. To what degree did the TPA assignment enhance the teacher candidate’s understanding of the many decision-making processes in teaching?

2. To what degree did the TPA assignment convey the importance of postlesson evaluation and reflection on one's own teaching decisions?
3. To what degree did the TPA assignment enhance the teacher candidate's understanding of the implications of gathering and analyzing student data for instructional purposes?
4. To what degree did feedback given to the candidate provide more insight into the expectations of the teaching profession?

Review of the Literature

The majority of published research on the CalTPA has focused on the PACT version and specifically on the rationale for this high-stakes authentic assessment (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2013), content validity and reliability (Duckor, Castellano, Téllez, Wihardini, & Wilson, 2014; Wilkerson, 2015), interrater reliability (Porter, 2010), and the relationship between supervisors' predictions of candidate scores (Sandholtz & Shea, 2012).

One study focused on the single-campus TPA at Fresno State (FAST). According to the authors, the FAST model was developed to collect assessment data for an upcoming NCATE visit (Torgerson et al., 2009).

One aspect of the PACT version are the embedded signature assessments, or ESAs, that are included in courses prior to student teaching. Larsen and Calfee (2005) described ESAs as "campus-specific assignments chosen from standard criteria that track a teacher candidate's growth over time" (p. 151). While the California state law requiring the TPA went into place in 2008, most California universities were piloting TPAs several years before that (Okhremtchouk, Newell, & Rosa, 2013). The benefit of this long-term operation now is that candidate scores on the PACT can be linked to their students as a value-added measure. Newton (2010) linked PACT scores with four separate value-added estimates for 14 first- and second-year teachers with 259 students in third through sixth grades. For each additional point a teacher scored on PACT (evaluated on a 44-point scale), his or her students averaged a gain of one percentile point per year on the California Standards Tests as compared with similar students.

Little research has been published on the teacher candidates' views of these TPAs. One dissertation "examined survey responses of piloting and control group candidates before and after completing the PACT" in 2003–2004 (Chung, 2005, p. iv). Chung's findings suggest that the experience of completing the PACT promoted learning and growth in areas of teaching that were experiential gaps in the existing learning opportunities provided by the university and student teaching placements. Another study investigated 137 teacher education candidates' perceptions from one University of California campus (Okhremtchouk et al., 2009). Another single-campus study focused on analyzing test scores of 87 teacher certification

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candidates in a large university in southern California, starting with a cohort in 2004–2005 and subsequent cohorts in 3 consecutive academic years: 2005–2006, 2006–2007, and 2007–2008 (Verdi, Riggs, & Riggs, 2012). The Verdi et al. study did not include candidate perceptions. Still another single-campus study at a large public university in southern California focused on 106 candidates preparing for math and science teaching and compared 23 undergraduates and 83 postbaccalaureate candidates (van Es & Conroy, 2009). The majority of this study focused on content analysis of the PACT exam, but it did conclude with an exit survey that focused on a self-evaluation by candidates about how prepared they were for teaching. Now that California institutions have greater experience with implementing PACT, there have been more published articles, with one whole journal issue focused entirely on PACT (Lit & Lotan, 2013; Peck & McDonald, 2013; Sloan, 2013; Whittaker & Nelson, 2013). Two additional studies were published in 2005 in *The New Educator* that were focused on more recent PACT implementations (Bunch, Aguirre, & Téllez, 2015; Gainsburg & Ericson, 2015).

Perceived Value of Teaching Performance Assessment

During the development of the PACT, the value of the TPA was discussed by developers and implementers (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Two values stood out during these discussions. The first was the value to the program and the faculty of scoring the TPA to inform program improvement. The second value was the perceived value to the teacher candidate. A teacher candidate in the field would better understand the expectations of teaching by taking the TPA and would improve his or her effectiveness from feedback the candidate received about his or her TPA. Moreover, programs in California were expected to incorporate additional *key assessments*, known in some institutions as *signature assignments*, *embedded assignments*, or *content area tasks*, embedded into courses prior to the student teaching semester and in addition to the TPA to further enhance the program improvement value and teacher candidate improvement value. Though these expected values of the TPA were promoted, how much value these TPAs actually provided teacher candidates remains a question.

Research Methodology

Data Collection

This article utilized a mixed methods approach (Mertler & Charles, 2008). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via a 10-question survey using a Likert scale and an opportunity for open-ended comments from 1,000 participants.

Data Sources

The demographic data gathered from survey respondents included the type of credential being sought, the type of university attended, and the TPA model completed (see Table 1).

Of the 1,000 survey respondents, more than 74% identified enrollment in either a single-subject or multiple-subject credentialing program. A small number of respondents (2%) also identified enrollment in a special education credentialing program, whereas nearly one-fourth of respondents did not identify the type of credentialing program they completed.

Survey respondents reported attending a private university (54%), whereas smaller numbers reported attending either a California State University (CSU; 38%) or University of California (UC) campus (6%). All respondents had completed one of the three models of TPA and been issued a California credential prior to taking the survey. The TPA model taken by respondents included the CalTPA (58%), PACT (16%), and FAST (2%). One-fourth of respondents did not identify the model of TPA they completed, leading researchers to believe that respondents did not know the model of TPA they had completed as a teacher candidate or had forgotten the name of the assessment by the time they participated in the survey.

The quantitative data gathered information on the type of credential respondents were seeking at the time of TPA completion; the type of university attended;

Table 1
Respondent Credential Type, University Type,
and Type of Teaching Performance Assessment Taken

	<i>n</i>	%
Credential		
Single subject	467	47
Multiple subject	533	53
Special education ^a	45	5
University		
University of California	57	6
California State University	375	38
Private	544	54
Other	24	2
TPA		
CalTPA	575	58
PACT	157	16
FAST	22	2
Do not know	246	25

Note. CalTPA = California Teaching Performance Assessment. FAST = Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers. PACT = Performance Assessment for California Teachers. TPA = teaching performance assessment.

^aStudents in special education also included multiple or single subjects.

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to what degree the TPA did or did not enhance the respondent's understanding of distinct teaching aspects; and, if feedback was received, the degree to which that feedback was valuable. The qualitative data, gathered from the comments sections of the survey, further illustrated the positive and negative perceptions of the teacher candidates with regard to the TPA. The CCTC made available the e-mail addresses of Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) induction directors across California. Induction directors sent the survey to 1,200 newly credentialed preliminary elementary and secondary teachers who had completed TPA as one of the requirements of their preliminary teaching credential and who were participating in a beginning teacher induction program. As part of the panel, the research team created, piloted, and launched a survey about the value and efficacy of the TPA in October 2012. The survey asked teachers who were in their first or second year of teaching about the value, efficacy, and validity of the TPA they had completed in their credentialing program. Furthermore, these teachers were asked about the time commitment of the TPA and about any feedback they had received. The survey closed when 1,000 responses were reached on February 12, 2013.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in two phases. In the first phase, the survey responses of the new teachers were reviewed and data were disaggregated across the two most common models of TPAs: the CalTPA and PACT. Because the FAST model only included 22 participants, or 2% of the sample, these were excluded from the quantitative analysis. Because each survey item allowed for comments, these were reviewed to understand the reasons why new teachers responded as they did. To best accomplish this, five researchers randomly selected 25 new teacher surveys and identified the themes in those responses. The research team used qualitative data analyzing techniques that suggest, "as you read through your data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out. . . . These words and phrases are coding categories" (Bogan & Biklen, 2003, p. 161). Based on researcher consensus, the following themes emerged: value, quality of time, quantity of time, validity, suggestions, emotional reactions, and other (see Table 2).

Each research member then coded 200 student surveys. The codes from the teacher surveys were entered into the qualitative software program NVivo (QSR International, 2014). For each theme, teacher responses were aggregated across all surveys, reviewed for consistency, and reported out to display what the new teachers were communicating within each of the larger themes.

Results

The results of the survey will be reported first for the CalTPA model, followed by results for the PACT model.

CalTPA and Enhanced Understanding of Teacher Practices

Respondents indicated whether they believed the CalTPA enhanced their understanding of three aspects of teaching: decision-making processes in teaching, postevaluation of teaching decisions, and gathering and analyzing data for instruction (see Table 3). The majority of respondents affirmed the CalTPA experience had enhanced their understanding of effective teaching practices across all three aspects to some degree, whereas 25% or less said they had experienced no enhanced understanding of teaching practices. Thirty-five percent affirmed enhanced understanding in decision-making processes in teaching to an “adequate or significant degree.” Thirty-nine percent said CalTPA “somewhat” enhanced their understanding of the decision-making processes.

Additionally, 44% affirmed enhanced understanding of postevaluation of teaching decisions to an “adequate or significant degree,” whereas 33% said CalTPA

Table 2
Coding Themes Found in Survey Responses

Theme	Definition
Value	Does the statement contain information about the candidate’s opinion or perception that the TPA is of good value or not? Example: “Too much paperwork.”
Quality of time	Does the statement contain language as to the quality of the time? Example: “It took a lot of time that could have been better spent working for or with students” or “a waste of time.”
Quantity of time	Does the statement refer to the amount of time that the TPA took? Example: “TPAs are incredibly time consuming.”
Validity	Does the statement made attend to the relationship between teaching, pedagogy, and the TPA? Do candidates feel that it is a good tool for learning about teaching? Do candidates feel that the TPA has nothing to do with teaching? Example: “I found it valuable to watch the video of myself teaching and reflect on my delivery.”
Suggestions	Does the candidate’s response offer any suggestions about how to change the TPA to improve it? Example: “Wish that I would have gotten more feedback about my TPA.”
Emotional reaction	Does the response contain an emotional component that gives insight into the state of mind of the candidate? Example: “The whole thing was worthless and very stressful.”
Other important	Does the response contain something we have not yet identified? If so, then code as “other important.”

Note. TPA = teaching performance assessment.

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enhanced their understanding “somewhat” in this category. Forty-seven percent said the CalTPA enhanced their understanding in gathering and analyzing data for instruction to an “adequate or significant degree,” whereas 34% said CalTPA enhanced their understanding “somewhat” in this category.

PACT and Enhanced Understanding of Teacher Practices

Table 3 also indicates whether respondents believed the PACT had enhanced their understanding in the three teaching aspects: decision-making processes in teaching, postevaluation of teaching decisions, and gathering and analyzing data for instruction. In each case, the majority of respondents affirmed that the PACT experience had enhanced their understanding of effective teaching practice across all three aspects to some degree, whereas 9% or less asserted that they had experienced no enhanced understanding of teaching practices. Fifty-three percent affirmed an enhanced understanding of decision-making processes for teaching to an “adequate or significant degree.” Thirty-eight percent said PACT enhanced their understanding “somewhat” in this category. More than 61% of respondents affirmed enhanced understanding of postevaluation of teaching decisions to an “adequate or significant degree,” whereas 34% said PACT enhanced their understanding “somewhat” in this category. A similar number of respondents, 60%, said the PACT enhanced their understanding in gathering and analyzing data for instruction to an “adequate or significant degree,” whereas 34% said PACT enhanced their understanding “somewhat” in this category. Only 9%, 4%, and 6%, respectively, reported that the

Table 3
Degree to Which the CalTPA and PACT Enhanced Understanding of Teaching Practices

Degree of understanding	Decision-making process in teaching		Postevaluation of teaching decisions		Gathering and analyzing data for instruction	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
CalTPA						
Significant	88	9	124	12	143	14
Adequate	260	26	317	32	332	33
Somewhat	395	40	332	33	335	34
Not at all	256	26	227	23	190	119
PACT						
Significant	236	24	255	25	242	24
Adequate	293	29	363	36	363	36
Somewhat	382	38	338	34	338	34
Not at all	89	9	44	4	57	6

Note. CalTPA = California Teaching Performance Assessment. PACT = Performance Assessment for California Teachers.

PACT assessment did not enhance their understanding of these effective teaching practices at all.

In conclusion, survey data showed that the TPA experience, regardless of the model, enhanced understanding of teacher practices in three aspects: decision-making processes in teaching, postreflection of teaching decisions, and gathering and analyzing data to inform instruction. However, although both CalTPA and PACT users reported enhanced understanding as a result of the TPA experience, PACT users indicated a greater impact on their teaching practices than did CalTPA users.

TPA and Clinical Practice Experience

To obtain beginning teacher perceptions of the relationship between completing TPA and a successful clinical practice experience, two questions were asked. The first asked teachers to reflect on their perception at the time of student teaching, and the second asked them to see if their opinion afterward was different. Table 4 reports a cross-tabulation of TPA perceptions at the time of student teaching by the four models. A chi-square test of significance revealed a statistically significant relationship between candidates' perceptions and type of TPA, $\chi^2(3) = 8.837, p < .05$.

Table 4 also compares the looking back perspective by the four models and was not statistically significant ($p < .072$). A second analysis was completed selecting just the three models that students identified and eliminating the "don't know" category. This second analysis was significant at the $p < .05$ level.

For the CalTPA group, more than 75% of respondents reported during the clinical practice portion of their teacher credential program that they felt the CalTPA "took away" from the clinical practice experience. When later reflecting on the value of

Table 4
Cross-Tabulation of Perceptions of TPA Taking Away
or Enhancing Clinical Practice Experience by TPA Model

	TPA completed, n (%)				Total
	CalTPA ^a	PACT ^b	FAST ^c	Don't know ^d	
At the time^e					
Enhanced	141 (25%)	53 (34%)	8 (36%)	79 (32%)	281 (28%)
Took away	434 (76%)	104 (66%)	14 (64%)	167 (68%)	719 (72%)
Looking back^f					
Enhanced	209 (36%)	75 (48%)	8 (36%)	92 (37%)	384 (38%)
Took away	366 (64%)	82 (52%)	14 (64%)	154 (63%)	616 (62%)

Note. N = 1,000. CalTPA = California Teaching Performance Assessment. FAST = Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers. PACT = Performance Assessment for California Teachers. TPA = teaching performance assessment.

^aN = 575. ^bN = 157. ^cN = 22. ^dN = 246. ^e $\chi^2(3) = 8.837, p < .05$. ^f $\chi^2(3) = 6.995, p < .072$.

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the CalTPA during clinical practice, 64% still reported the CalTPA “took away” from their clinical practice experience (see Table 4). Only 24% of respondents felt the CalTPA enhanced their experience in their clinical practice assignments at the time they were taking it, and 36% affirmed that the assessment did enhance their experience as they now look back.

PACT and Clinical Practice Experience

Sixty-six percent of PACT users reported that taking the TPA during clinical practice “took away” from their experience. Though PACT users responded more favorably to the TPA in hindsight of having completed the TPA, 52% still reported the TPA “took away” from their teaching experience while they were in their clinical practice assignments (see Table 4).

In summary, when asked to assess whether the TPA enhanced or took away from their clinical practice experience, as perceived both *at the time* and *looking back*, the majority of both CalTPA and PACT users reported that the TPA “took away” from their clinical experience. The beginning teachers who utilized the FAST model at Fresno State, though a very small group ($n = 22$), responded similarly to both CalTPA and the overall percentage of 62%. The large group of students who did not identify their model on the survey also had very similar results to both the CalTPA and the overall percentage of the entire sample. PACT users gave a more favorable response than did users of any of the other three models.

CalTPA and Feedback

The majority of CalTPA respondents (61%) had not received any feedback from their credentialing programs about their TPA other than a passing or nonpassing score. Of those who did receive feedback, 27% felt the feedback they received was somewhat valuable, and 48% stated the feedback received was adequately or significantly valuable. Twenty-five percent felt the feedback received was “not at all” valuable to understanding effective teaching practices.

PACT and Feedback

Like the CalTPA respondents, the majority of PACT respondents (69%) had not received any feedback from their credentialing programs about their TPA other than passing or nonpassing scores. Respondents who had received feedback reported that the feedback was valuable, with 55% stating that the value was significant to adequate, whereas 31% felt the feedback was somewhat valuable and 14% reported that the feedback was “not at all” valuable to their understanding of effective teaching practices.

Consistent to both TPA models, most respondents were unable to report on the value of feedback because the majority of survey participants reported that they

did not receive any feedback from their TPA evaluators. Overall, fewer PACT users received feedback than did CalTPA users. However, both CalTPA and PACT users who did receive feedback on their TPAs affirmed its positive value, though PACT users responded more favorably than CalTPA users on the value of the feedback received.

Elaborating on the Qualitative Findings

Researchers were able to extract clear and common themes from the 1,983 comments collected across both of the TPA models. In Table 5, the node in the left column refers to the reoccurring themes as identified by the candidate respondents: the source was how many respondents commented on that theme and the reference was the total number of times the theme was referred to across all responses. Each of the narrative files was coded to distinguish between the types of California institutions and the TPA model a campus used. In the narrative examples used in this

Table 5
Student Responses Identified According to Node, Source, and Reference

Node	Source	No. references
Value		
Negative	133	317
Positive	74	120
Equal	2	2
Quantity of time		
Negative	85	116
Positive	1	1
Emotional reaction		
Negative	59	90
Positive	2	2
Equal	1	1
Validity		
Negative	30	49
Positive	67	93
Equal	1	1
Quality of time		
Negative	115	200
Positive	29	44
Other important		
Negative	4	5
Positive	1	1
Suggestion	41	46

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portion, the first letter specifies type of campus (U = UC; C = CSU; P = private). The second letter specifies the TPA model (P = PACT; T = CalTPA). For example, a file coded 0974UP would mean UC and PACT. The numbers preceding the two letters refer to the randomly assigned number for the file.

Value of the TPA Based on the Qualitative Data

The value of the TPA, regardless of the model, was not obvious to many TPA users. When the responses were analyzed for this theme, more candidates responded negatively ($n = 133$) than positively ($n = 74$), and those who responded negatively repeated this theme almost three times as often ($n = 317$) as the positive references ($n = 120$). Beyond the number of times students responded negatively or positively around the theme of value, there were recurring subthemes within the larger category of value seen by candidates.

One reoccurring subtheme in the category of value was the relationship between what teacher candidates do with TPAs in their credentialing programs and what beginning teachers experienced in their BTSA inductions. Newly credentialed teachers in California participate in a 2-year BTSA program offered either through the district or county office of education and, at successful conclusion, are recommended to CCTC for their clear credential. While it might be assumed that the connection between TPA and BTSA programs would be developed somewhat consistently across the state, the responses of candidates were not uniform. Although respondents were frustrated at having to repeat the TPA experience later as a BTSA participant, some had a more positive experience moving from TPA to BTSA. More positive views of the link between TPA and BTSA were “I felt like the TPAs prepared me adequately for BTSA” (0974UP) and “TPA has helped me with my BTSA program and knowing how to gather information” (0888CP).

Some responses provided alternative views of the TPA experience. One respondent stated,

I feel that gathering and analyzing data was what I was doing in my credential program. . . . This additional TPA assignment/requirement was just an additional hoop to jump through when I was already overwhelmed at being in a classroom for the first time. Then to have to do the same sort of exercise again with BTSA is too much. No other profession has so many requirements to show mastery. It's too much. (0121UC)

Though many student teachers reported being stressed out during the experience, many saw the value of TPA as guiding them toward more effective teaching. One respondent said, “It was a complement to what I was doing in the classroom and it made it easier to teach after the case studies were completed. It was like a recipe for success” (0571UC).

A number of the respondents who reported positive value in the TPA saw the connection between lesson planning and student assessment. One responded, “How

to backwards design lessons and track student data was beneficial” (0816UP). Another positive aspect of the TPA was the requirement to videotape themselves in a classroom during student teaching, evaluate their own performance, and be evaluated by the TPA assessor. One respondent said, “Because I was required to analyze student data and video myself teaching, watching myself on video was eye opening” (0430UC).

Quantity of Time

Overwhelmingly, respondents reported that the assessment required an average of 22 hours to complete. Responses analyzed for this theme showed that many had more negative feelings ($n = 85$) than positive feelings ($n = 1$) about time spent on TPAs. They shared various versions of the sentiment “TPAs are incredibly time consuming” (0411CP). The direct result of time consumption on an external task meant to candidates that they were unable to spend adequate time preparing for essential “in-class” requirements, especially when student teaching.

Respondents stated that they felt unprepared for their student teaching, which led to negative experiences, both physical and emotional. One respondent stated, “It took my time away from planning and reflecting on lessons for student teaching and made me feel more stressed out” (0404CP). More specifically, at the same time as the TPA experience took away from a candidate’s in-class preparation time and enhanced an already stressful situation, numerous candidates also commented that content they prepared for their TPAs only served their student teaching responsibilities in an extremely limited manner. One reported, “TPAs had a lot of work/questions that only pertained to one lesson plan” (0434CC). One solution offered by a small but significant group of candidates was to decrease time spent on TPAs by eliminating redundancy within the assessment. A respondent succinctly described the TPA experience in relation to quantity of time by stating,

The idea behind the TPA is good and I can see the value. In practice, however, the TPA took so much time it did not enhance the experience at all. A much shorter version without the redundancy of questions would probably have been more helpful. (0483UP)

Validity

The area of validity also generated positive comments. The most straightforward comment for validity of the assignment was “this assessment is valid with regards to being an effective teacher” (0427UP). The most common positive comments in the area of validity were around the practice of reflection, such as “constant reflection and data analysis is important to the teaching profession” (0404CP) and “it helped me be a reflective teacher and understand a teacher’s job better” (0587CP). Less frequent but repeated by many confirming the validity of the assessment were “TPA taught me the importance of differentiation” (0444UP) and “to this day I still

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incorporate strategies I learned through the TPA" (0413CC). Negative comments in the area of validity were variations of "this was an additional hoop, busy work" (0405 UP), "I only did enough to satisfy the assignment" (0868CP), and "[it was] irrelevant and meaningless" (0849CP).

Quality of Time

Negative comments on the quality of time were nearly 4:1 over positive ones. The most common negative comments were consistent with "it took away from the student teaching experience" (0402CC) or "it was a lot of busy work" (0437CC). Many student teachers were quoted as saying, "I was so focused on completing the assignment with a passing score that I was unable to fully devote myself to teaching" (0441CP).

Quality of time comments coded as positive had respondents stating that the TPA process "enhanced the student teaching experience" (0566CP), "how to write lesson objectives and make sure that I am assessing what I set out to teach" (0861PC), and "helped me see more clearly how assessment and planning are connected" (0885PU).

Emotional Reactions

Many of the respondent comments connoted a negative emotional reaction. One respondent said, "I felt burdened by it and stressed instead of having more energy and time to pour into student teaching" (0884CC), while another stated, "It was a ridiculous exercise in busy work and how much useless paperwork is involved in teaching" (0570CP). Some respondents felt stressed and that they had too many other responsibilities during the clinical practice experience.

Suggestions

The vast majority of the suggestions were to provide more feedback to future teacher candidates: "Would like more than just a numerical feedback, put so much work into the TPA I would've liked more feedback" (0999CP); "The TPA process was too long and did not provide feedback initially. I would have liked additional personal feedback rather than my own feedback on the teaching process" (0902CP).

Another suggestion was to eliminate the redundancy in the TPA, which could reduce the quantity of time. One respondent stated, "The process is good, but the written reflections and responses are entirely too repetitive and long. I wrote the same thing over and over again, because the prompts were redundant" (0959CP).

It was also suggested that there should be more time dedicated to student teaching and less time to this assessment: "I spent more time perfecting and creating a data program. It would have been more beneficial to use one like I have at my school. Then I could spend the time analyzing my practice" (0824UC).

Finally, respondents wished the TPA would be more connected with what they were currently working on as new teachers: “After all that work with TPA, then having to do the same sort of exercise again with BTSA, it’s too much” (0405UP). This suggestion and others are based on the survey responses from beginning teachers who did not value the TPA as part of their learning or said it took away from the clinical practice experience.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our data suggest several conclusions. First, the TPA experience enhanced understanding of teacher practices in three areas: decision-making processes in teaching, postreflection of teaching decisions, and gathering and analyzing data to inform instruction. A second conclusion is the overwhelming sentiment that the length of the TPA and the required time commitment on the part of the candidate are excessive, especially during the clinical practice experience. A third conclusion is a perceived lack of meaningful connection between the TPA process in the teacher preparation program and the BTSA program. Lastly, there is a clear absence of feedback provided to the candidate after such a significant commitment of time and effort on the assignment. Feedback is necessary for teachers to become more effective in their practice.

Out of these conclusions come four recommendations. The first recommendation is to reduce the overall length of the TPA while retaining the focus on key aspects of teaching, such as instruction based on student information, selecting effective assessments, and planning future instruction based on student performance data. The second recommendation is to find ways to make a more obvious correlation between the TPA and credentialing program courses, assignments, and other assessments, especially with regard to the clinical practice experience. The third recommendation is to link the candidate’s TPA experience during the credentialing program with the expectations of the district’s beginning teacher support system, creating a meaningful bridge from teacher training to initial employment. The final recommendation is to include additional ways to give feedback to teacher candidates.

We suggest that the TPA could reduce its overall length by making a stronger correlation and clearer relationship between the TPA and other credentialing program requirements. Respondents perceived the TPA as being an excessively long and repetitive assignment. By providing a more intentionally unified assessment approach, the teacher preparation program could decrease the time commitment associated with the TPA during an already impacted teacher training experience and allow other program assessments to cover important teaching aspects. By allowing the teacher preparation programs to take responsibility for assessing distinct aspects of teaching currently covered by the TPA, the TPA could be reduced in scope, and the relationship between the preparation program components and the TPA could be strengthened. Candidates could appreciate the integrated experience rather than disparage the requirements placed upon them.

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Because candidates reported that the TPA interrupted clinical practice and may even have prevented them from advancing their instructional skills, programs should spread the work of the TPA over the entire preparation program. Also, teacher educators need to make more explicit connections between clinical practice and the value of TPA. Candidates need to see how their teaching reflections expressed in the TPA can improve their work during clinical practice. To make a clearer relationship between what is learned during credentialing program course work and what is asked on the TPA, preparation programs must help the students make the connection (e.g., this class prepares you for TPA 1 or Task 3 in these specific ways, or this task goes along with clinical practice because . . .). To strengthen the TPA–course work relationship, programs could embed assignments in methods courses reflecting the teaching aspects being assessed with the TPA. For example, when multicultural courses require teacher candidates to prepare a profile of the students in their fieldwork class, the importance of knowing all aspects of students before planning instructional experiences becomes clearer.

The third recommendation is that universities and school districts develop an explicit link between teacher preparation programs, the TPA, and district induction programs. Respondents in the survey were in the midst of an induction program, and many commented that the TPA experience could be better utilized in the induction program. If teacher preparation is part of a learning progression from undergraduate teacher candidate work to beginning teachers in classrooms (i.e., preservice to in-service), then it makes sense that all TPA models, including edTPA, be used in intentional ways along this continuum.

The fourth recommendation is to seek ways to provide feedback to teacher candidates about their performance on the TPA. Assessments coupled with feedback are crucial for student learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2014), and almost all of the survey respondents wished they had received more feedback. Although a majority of respondents reported receiving no feedback, those who reported receiving feedback said it was adequately or significantly valuable. Assessment experiences without feedback are not growth experiences for the learner, the teacher, or the program. Feedback must be timely and specific to enhance learning, and well-designed assessments can provide specific, personalized, and timely information to guide both learning and teaching (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005). It is recommended that revised implementation standards for the TPAs, as well as edTPA implementation, detail appropriate ways for assessors to provide feedback that will further develop the candidate and inform teaching and learning, while retaining the necessary validity and reliability of these high-stakes assessments.

As the CCTC investigates the options for a revised system of assessment for TPAs, we suggest that the perspective of the candidates be carefully considered. Performance assessments yield evidence that reveals candidate understanding, and this authentic application calls for candidates to transfer knowledge, using what they know in new situations. The TPA enables candidates to apply their learning

thoughtfully and flexibly, thereby demonstrating their understanding of the many teaching aspects crucial to effective instruction, and perhaps resulting in a more coherent and fruitful assessment experience. Realizing this goal can provide teacher education programs the opportunity to reduce the length and scope of the TPA by sharing the assessment of teaching aspects across measures, provide meaningful feedback to teacher candidates, and link the TPA to district induction programs.

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