

Learning through Action: Teacher Candidates and Performance Assessments

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Abstract

Performance assessments such as the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) are used by state departments of education as one measure of competency to grant teaching certification. Although the edTPA is used as a summative assessment, research studies in other forms of performance assessments, such as the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) and the National Board Certification for Professional Teaching Standards (NBCPT) have shown that they can be used as learning tools for both preservice and experienced teachers and as a form of feedback for teacher education programs. The present study investigated the ways in which the edTPA functioned as an opportunity to learn in one elementary teacher education program. Data were collected through seven teacher candidate case studies, two focus groups, and one cohort survey. The findings indicated that there are opportunities for candidates to develop their practice through the edTPA experience. There are variations in the extent to which candidates take up these opportunities to learn. Finally, the learning opportunities are likely affected by the personal characteristics of the candidates and by the nature of interactions and collaborations they have with others in the context of their participation in the edTPA process.

Chapter 1

Performance assessments, sometimes called authentic assessments, are a form of testing that requires students to perform a task in order to demonstrate that they have mastered specific skills and competencies. Students must actively develop their approaches to the task under defined conditions, knowing that their work will be evaluated according to agreed-upon standards. Performance assessments are frequently used today by schools of education and state departments of education for teacher licensing requirements in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2012) due to the performance standards-based teacher education (PSBTE) reform movement in teacher education (Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2002). The standards for an effective teacher include not only behavioral competencies, but cognitive, dispositional, and reflective practices as well (Zeichner, 2005). In many states, these standards are measured through the use of a Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA), a classroom-based portfolio assessment where preservice teachers must demonstrate successful teaching practices as indicated by multiple rubrics.

Overview of Teacher Education Reform Movements

Performance-based approaches to educating new teachers are not a new phenomenon in the history of teacher education within the U.S. (Zeichner, 2005). The first wave of competency based reform in teacher education began with the Commonwealth teacher training study in 1925 (Charters & Waples, 1929). This study identified key indicators of success in teaching and translated these into traits that might be taught within the curriculum of teacher education programs; a panel of 21 individuals determined that teacher education programs should incorporate 83 traits and 1,001 activities into their courses (Zeichner, 2005). Zeichner (2005) writes that “while this research effort had little influence on teacher education programs

throughout the U.S., it set a precedent for the kind of thinking about how to determine the curriculum for teacher education programs that continues to the present day.”

A second wave of standards based reform emerged in the late 1960s with origins in behavioral psychology. Teacher competencies were to be acquired and demonstrated as observable events (Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2002). In the 1970s, the U.S. Office of Education, alongside colleges, universities, and state departments of education developed models of competency based teacher education (CBTE) (Arends, 2006; Clarke, 1969). These projects identified and categorized competencies performed by “effective teachers,” focusing on detailed descriptions of specific teacher behaviors (Arends, 2006). Competency-based programs sharply differed from teacher education programs that had previously focused on completion of experience or coursework; within this competency-based model, teacher licensure was earned based on demonstrated performance rather than completion of a list of courses. Zeichner (2005), writes “In the 1960s and 1970s, performance or competency-based teacher education (P/CBTE) dominated the literature even though the actual implementation of these programs was limited.”

The current wave of teacher education reforms conceptualizes teacher quality in terms of both content knowledge and pedagogical competence (Larsen & Calfee, 2005). Teachers need to have a wide knowledge base, pedagogical skills, and the ability to understand their students and the aims of the curriculum. Teaching demands are increasing due to more diversity in learners and curricular expectations (Darling-Hammond, 2012), underscoring the fact that teaching is complex in nature, and therefore, difficult to assess and evaluate (Sandholtz & Shea, 2012). One response to the increase in complexity of teaching and therefore, teacher evaluation, has been the development of more “authentic” approaches to evaluation of teaching (Darling-Hammond &

Synder, 1999). This is reflected particularly in the holistic nature of a teacher performance assessment (TPA). A TPA includes artifacts from teaching, such as lesson plans and video of instruction, assessment of student work, and the teacher's reflection on teaching. In addition to providing a measure of teacher quality, the classroom-focused nature of performance assessments suggests that they may be used to promote teacher learning (Athanases, 1994).

An emerging movement in the reform of teacher education is practice-based teacher education. This strand of research has investigated ways of focusing teachers' professional education on "core" or "high leverage" practices of teaching (Forzani, 2014). These core practices are what teachers must execute to help their students learn and include activities both inside and beyond the classroom, such as leading a discussion of solutions to a mathematics problem, assessing students' oral reading, and creating and maintaining an orderly and supportive environment for learning (Ball & Forzani, 2009). These practices are considered high leverage because they not only include broad cultural competence, sensitivity, and communication skills, but because effective teaching requires using specific moves in particular contexts, based on knowledge of one's students. Ball and Forzani (2009) noted that skillful integration of these teacher moves into teaching also "depends on opportunities to practice and to measure one's performance against exemplars." The teacher performance assessments are one opportunity for teachers to enact core practices in teaching and to assess their performance against carefully developed standards.

Teacher Education Policy & the Performance Assessment Initiative

Performance assessments were created by teacher educators in order to develop teaching as a profession (Pechone, Pigg, Chung, Souviney, 2005). Modeled after the National Boards for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), performance assessments for preservice teachers

are used as a strategy to develop a teacher's expertise and improve the quality of teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013). The precursor to the edTPA, the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) was developed teacher educators. However, due to the current national edTPA initiative, performance based teacher assessment has been adopted as a policy tool by some states to determine who enters to the profession and to ensure that teacher preparatory schools are providing adequate skills for potential teachers.

Since TPAs are part of the current accountability movement, literature on performance assessments generally focus on their function as a gateway assessment. However, the nature of a performance assessment, which includes analysis of lesson artifacts and teacher reflections, also lends itself to use as a tool for teacher learning. The cycle of planning, instruction, and assessment embedded in the nature of performance assessments may provide opportunities to learn for teachers (Athanases, 1994; Pecheone & Chung, 2006). In particular, recent research has shown that reflection and collaboration (which are key components of the TPA process) can be a source of teacher learning (Horn, 2010).

The Architecture of the edTPA

The current edTPA has roots in the National Board professional teacher standard certification and was created by teacher educators at Stanford University. The edTPA for preservice elementary teachers covers content in either Literacy or Math. The performance assessment consists of 3-5 lessons on one learning segment. There are 3 tasks that teacher candidates must complete: 1) Planning for Instruction and Assessment, 2) Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning, 3) Assessing Student Learning. Washington State adds a Student Voice component; in all there are 18 rubrics in the edTPA for the teacher candidates.

Learning Opportunities in edTPA

The emerging literature suggests that there is potential value for the edTPA to be used as an opportunity for teacher candidate learning (Chung, 2008; Lin, 2012). The edTPA is based on deep analysis of actual teaching tasks, which can be a valuable educational experience for preservice teachers as they prepare for and go through the process of completing the assessment (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Other studies have shown that there may be different constraints in teacher candidates' ability to engage with the teaching tasks required by the edTPA. For example, some candidates have autonomy within their teaching practicum to select content and instructional strategies, while other candidates are limited by their cooperating teacher's expectations and routines and district mandated curriculum (Chung, 2008).

In the present study, I aim to clarify what the candidate learning outcomes related to the edTPA are, as well as identify opportunities and constraints to learning and the contextual situations under which learning is most likely to occur. Findings may suggest how teacher education programs might better support their teacher candidates to not only complete the edTPA, but to learn from the experience.

Research Questions

- 1) What opportunities to learn exist for teacher candidates from the edTPA process?
- 2) To what extent do teacher candidates take up opportunities to learn during the edTPA experience?
- 3) What contextual conditions (e.g. collaboration with peers and/or program faculty), prior learning, and other background attributes are associated with variations in what and how teacher candidates learn from the edTPA process?

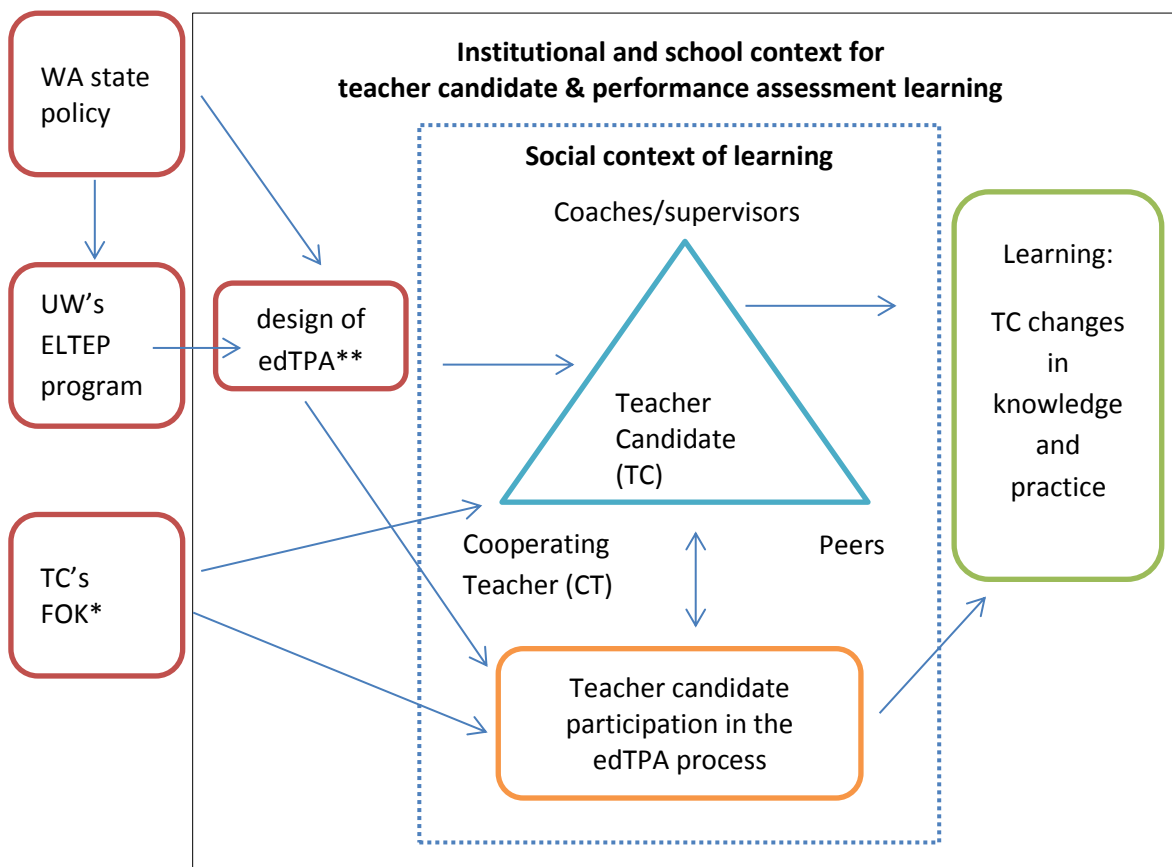
General Theoretical Framework

I use a sociocultural perspective to investigate the affordances and constraints of the edTPA process related to the opportunities to learn for preservice teachers. In this particular theoretical orientation, learning is understood to be mediated by social processes, including interactions with cooperating teachers, peers, and coaches. These interactions can be situated within the process of instruction or afterwards, during the process of analyzing and reflecting on instruction.

For example, Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on situated learning focuses on the relationship between learning and the social situations in which the learning occurs. Lave (1993) writes that learning is an integral aspect of any activity, and as such, knowledge is always under construction and in use. Learning, or mastery, can be described as the changing of actions relative to changing circumstance (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In an activity such as the edTPA, teacher candidates are required to participate in "real" teaching activities in order to engage in the assessment process. New teaching skills are thus enacted under conditions of "legitimate peripheral participation"- where a novice engages and participates in the actual practice under supervision of a more experienced and accomplished practitioner (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the context of participating in the edTPA, the teacher candidates may be conceptualized as novices who will learn the practice of teaching through apprenticeship from their professors and mentor teachers. The edTPA, considered from this perspective, can be understood as one model of apprenticeship that occurs at the end of the program where the candidates must demonstrate on the job proficiency. Using this sociocultural lens suggests that even though the edTPA is an individual task, learning does not occur in isolation; instead, learning is interactive and produced through social co-participation. In

summary, a sociocultural perspective foregrounds affordances to teacher candidate learning including: 1) social support from educators and peers, 2) the edTPA as a tool that may extend candidates' capacity to learn through its integration of core instructional practices (planning, instructing, and assessment) and yet may also constrain learning through these requirements, and 3) participatory engagement of emerging teachers in actual teaching tasks. The figure below depicts the conceptual framework of my study.



*FOK- Funds of Knowledge; TC's prior learning, beliefs, values, cultural/linguistic background
 **design of the edTPA- teaching practice (video), artifacts e.g. lesson plan, student work samples, and commentaries/reflections.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Teacher Candidate Learning from the edTPA

In Figure 1, I illustrate some of the institutional and social factors that are hypothesized to play a role in molding the candidate and the social interactions that may aid or hinder the learning process. The constructs on the outside of the larger solid square indicate external factors to this study. These constructs include Washington State policy for teachers, the policies embedded within the Elementary Teacher Education Program (ELTEP) at the University of Washington, Seattle, and the teacher candidates' funds of knowledge.

The solid square encompasses the factors that are the focus of this present study: components of the edTPA (planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection), teacher candidates' participation in the components of the edTPA, the interrelationship between each candidate and his/her educators, and what and how candidates learn as a result of this process. The dashed rectangle delineates the specific social context of learning for candidates as they work with educators and fellow candidates to produce an edTPA.

Theoretical Framework:

Rogoff's three planes applied to teacher candidate learning from the edTPA

While Lave and Wenger's ideas about "situated learning" serve as a theoretical lens for the study as whole, I drew on Rogoff's (1995) work to develop a more specific approach to interpreting the data from my study. I used Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis to investigate the ways in which candidate learning was situated in individual, interpersonal, and community/organizational contexts.

The affordances of Rogoff's three planes of analysis

I chose Rogoff's three planes of analysis because it afforded me the opportunity to look at the data from at least three different focal points. For example, I can examine a candidates'

experience on the edTPA by looking at his/her personal history, the nature of interactions and collaborations they have with others within the context of producing the edTPA, and in institutional factors that may affect their participation in the edTPA process.

The three planes of focus are not separate or hierarchical; instead, they afford different grain-sizes of focus within sociocultural activity. There are specific “concepts regarding learning processes” attributed to each plane: the processes within the personal plane are named “participatory appropriation,” the processes within the interpersonal plane are “guided participation,” and those within the community plane are “apprenticeship appropriation” (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, and Goldsmith, 1995)

The Personal Plane. Within the personal plane, the process of how individuals transform their understanding and action is through their own involvement in practical activity. The process of “participatory appropriation” occurs when an individual is changed through their involvement in an activity, with the goal of becoming prepared for subsequent related activities. Rogoff names this a processing of “becoming,” rather than that of “acquisition.” A person participating in an activity is part of the activity, not external from it.

Using Rogoff’s lens through the personal plane allowed me to focus on how the teacher candidates are changed participating in the edTPA process. The edTPA requires candidates to reflect on their own teaching practice, guided by their own values and/or mediated by their cultural or community affinity. There is opportunity (although not all teacher candidates take this up) to reflect on what is important to the teaching practice and what the candidate may want to bring forward to their teaching. For example, after the edTPA experience, a candidate may

note that diving deeply and intensively into a unit of instruction will benefit her students more than multiple lessons that cover a range of topics.

The Interpersonal Plane. In the interpersonal plane, Rogoff uses the concept of “guided participation” to refer to the systems of involvement between individuals as they participate in a cultural activity. The interpersonal plane of analysis includes not only how people communicate face-to-face, but in virtual distance interactions, such as through the mediums of email or social media. This plane also includes the choices an individual makes (or doesn’t make) to approach others, ask for resources, and construct meaning within the activity. The “guidance” refers to both cultural and social values as well as other individuals and “participation” refers to both active involvement and observation of an activity.

The interpersonal plane is a lens that allowed me focus on how each candidate interacts in a social context with his/her coach, cooperating teacher, and peers while doing the edTPA. A person engaging in learning with others during the edTPA process may talk through his lesson plans out loud in the presence of his peers. The audience may provide feedback about the feasibility of implementing said plans; this social process exemplifies “guided participation.”

The Community Plane. Rogoff’s third plane is the cultural and institutional lens, where the processes are termed “apprenticeship appropriation.” The focus is on a system of interpersonal involvements, including the ways in which individuals engage with others in culturally organized activities. This lens also examines the institutional structure and cultural practices surrounding that activity. This apprenticeship system involves more than expert-novice dyads; Rogoff (1990) writes that there isn’t always a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) because there isn’t a “more knowledgeable other.” Rogoff (1990) wrote in *Apprenticeship in*

Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context that “the apprenticeship model has the value of including more people than a single expert and a single novice; the apprenticeship system often involves a group of novices (peers) who serve as resources for one another (p. 39). While Rogoff limits the interaction within ZPD to constitute expert/novice relationships, the interactions between the novices in my study can certainly constitute ZPD because each participant has the potential to shift fluidly from expert to novice to expert, depending on the topic. Rogoff (1995) wrote that the community plane of analysis focuses on people participating with others in a culturally organized activity. In this study, the edTPA assessment is in line with the institutional practices of formal schooling; it is organized around the institutional practices within teacher education programs, it is in line with historical events in education, and guided by the western cultural value of gateway assessments.

In this study, each teacher candidate undergoing the edTPA is the unit of analysis. I use all three of Rogoff’s planes of analysis as different grain sizes for my analysis. The research questions center on the learning opportunities for individual teacher candidate learning, where the focus is how teacher candidates are affected. Rogoff (1995) explains, “Through engagement in an activity, individuals change and handle a later situation in ways prepared by their own participation in the previous situation.”

Through this view of sociocultural theory, the edTPA may be interpreted as both a tool and as a tool-mediated process- what Rogoff calls an organized cultural activity. The edTPA provides opportunity for reflection and writing, making it a cultural tool by Rogoff’s definition. Rogoff (1990) writes “literate activities as cultural practices channel individual thinking. Writing is a tool that encourages reflection and organization of information.” The edTPA as a cultural tool has the capacity to mediate candidates’ learning.

The edTPA is also an assessment *process*, and the opportunities to learn are embedded in the process as it is shaped by the various requirements, rubrics and affordances of the tool. Returning again to Rogoff's arguments about how all three planes of participation are intertwined, learning opportunities may be understood to be affected by the personal characteristics of the candidates, by the nature of interactions and collaborations they have with others in the context of their participation in the process, and by the cultural and institutional policies and practices that shape the process itself.

General Design of Study

My investigation is based primarily on comparative case studies of seven elementary teacher candidates as they underwent the edTPA process. The participants were strategically selected to reflect a diversity of learners from the Elementary Teacher Education Program (ELTEP) at the University of Washington, Seattle. In order to represent a range of experiences, the selected teacher candidates were chosen with consideration given to ethnicity, race, gender, and age (professional experience). I interviewed each candidate three times throughout the edTPA process and observed each of them teach an edTPA lesson. I observed the teacher candidates in ELTEP cohort during their two Writing Days on campus, looking for notable instances of collaboration. I interviewed the Coaches and Cooperating Teachers of my case study participants post- edTPA submission so they might talk about their involvement with the edTPA and the types of support required by their candidate. After their submission of the edTPA in May, I conducted two focus groups: one with students of color and one with non-students-of-color. I followed up with a survey to the entire cohort of teacher candidates asking them rate their agreement with statements related to their experiences with the edTPA. The

survey captured descriptive data around the candidates' perception of the ways the edTPA provided opportunities or constraints to their learning.

Significance of the Study

While research on teacher performance assessments generally focuses on the validity of the assessments as tools for evaluating preservice teacher quality, less research has been conducted that addresses learning outcomes of the edTPA for teacher candidates. My study seeks to identify candidates' opportunities to learn from their experiences with the edTPA, as well as the conditions under which they take up these opportunities. The learning outcomes of teacher candidates may inform the ways teacher education programs structure their implementation of the edTPA in order to support candidate learning.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In the review below, I discuss some of the relevant literature on adult learning that is most relevant to the features of the edTPA.

Teacher Learning through Reflection

Concepts of learning that focus specifically on adult learning emphasize the important of reflection, although there are varying definitions of reflection. Dewey's (1933) concept of "reflection," for instance, is defined broadly as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). More recently, Schön's (1983) theory of reflection define a professional practitioner as one with the ability to make independent decisions in order to be effective. Within Schön's theory, teachers are not as viewed technicians but rather, as professional practitioners who think about what they are doing within a learning society that practices reflective inquiry. Schön argues that learning can occur by going through this practice of reflective inquiry.

In his research on how professionals think about their work, Schön posits that growth can occur through the process of reflecting on one's motivations, thoughts, and actions. The ability to reflect on previous actions is a way to engage in continuous learning. In particular, by reflecting on teaching methods and student work, a teacher can benefit from critical self-reflection (Schön, 1983). Schön's work grew out of Dewey's (1933) notion of reflection where reflection is a continual appraisal of one's body of knowledge when faced with new evidence. Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles, and Lopez-Torres (2003) argued that reflection is embedded in the larger practice of teacher learning; reflection positions teachers as learners so they may go beyond mere

implementation of curriculum. In a study that investigated teacher candidate reflective practices, Stevenson and Cain (2013) collected data from coursework to student teaching on six teacher candidates. The collected data included interviews, lesson plans, observations, and post-observation conferences. The findings suggested that the way for teacher education programs to increase teacher candidate reflective practices is for the programs to facilitate opportunities for reflective practices. The findings also indicated that engaging with a knowledgeable other (Cooperating Teacher or Supervisor) supports candidates' reflective practice. In fact, quality of teacher candidate reflection appeared to be influenced by not only having opportunities to reflect, but also by being able to do so in a variety of ways.

Teacher Learning through Collaboration

Scholars have proposed that teacher learning has both individual and social features (Borko, 2004). Collaborations within a community of inquiry might be one beneficial approach to teachers' professional practice and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004). The notion of a community of practice is one perspective of sociocultural theory espoused by Lave and Wenger (1991). Through this particular lens, it is through the process of sharing information and experiences within a group that allows the members to learn from each other and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Other work in adult education also echoes the need for reflective social process with peers in order to learn (Brookfield, 1995). In order to develop, professional teachers may generate their own contextual theory of practice by adopting a critical reflective practice. Teachers must go beyond putting theory into practice and additionally, scrutinize their work and invite peers to question and critique as well.

Butler and Schnellert (2012) found important links between teacher collaboration and educational change. In their in-depth case study of a complex community of inquiry, Butler and Schnellert (2012) found that teachers worked collaboratively to use assessments of students' learning to refine and monitor practices in order to enhance student learning in their secondary classrooms. These communities of inquiry, which include opportunities for collaboration, have the potential to foster sustained and meaningful shifts in practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

In a comparative case study that looked at the relationship between teacher learning and collaboration in innovative teams, Meirink, Imants, Meijer, and Verloop (2010) collected quantitative and qualitative data from five temporary teacher teams in secondary schools. Each of these interdisciplinary teams had at least five meetings during the school year. The researchers observed and recorded field notes of the team meetings over a period of one school year. In order to obtain information on what the teachers learned, the teachers completed a questionnaire both at the beginning and at the end of the year on their beliefs about teaching and learning. Meirink et al. (2010) concluded that learning and collaboration are closely interconnected. The authors wrote:

This notion of interrelatedness of learning and organizing can be viewed as an alternative to the common assumptions about learning and collaboration, in which learning is viewed as the effect of collaboration as an organizational condition. Interdependent working relationships and alignment in their teams are to be viewed as co-created by teachers as actors, instead of organizational conditions outside teachers' sphere of discretion" (Meirink et al., 2010).

Individual teacher learning in these teams included changes in pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices, as well as changes in their collaborative work relationships with colleagues.

Teacher Replays

Other studies on teacher learning have suggested that collaboration and reflective practice can exist together. Horn's (2010) description of teacher replays, in which teachers recount

instances of their lessons in the presence of their colleagues, represents a contemporary example of how teacher learning may take place through the processes of reflection. In these peer groups, practicing teachers recount instances of their lessons, and collaboratively, provide insights in order to improve upon their teaching (Horn, 2010). By revisiting their lessons, the teachers describe classroom scenes for their colleagues; these detailed scenes help the teacher to understand the curriculum in a way that serves their students. By engaging in collegial conversation and sense making, teachers focus on their specificity within their classrooms and develop additional knowledge for teaching. This learning is deeply situated in practice and the teachers learn in and from interactions with their colleagues (Horn, 2010). Besides allowing teachers to connect general teaching principles to specific occurrences in their classrooms, these professional communities also aid in fostering collegial conversations that have the potential to support teachers' learning.

In analyzing conversations between teachers and researchers around classroom based performance assessments, group discussions were found to be an effective tool for the social construction of new ideas leading to teacher development (Borko, Mayfield, Marion, Flexer, & Cumbo, 1997). Other prominent teacher educators have also posited that teachers can continually learn through their early teaching careers (Grossman et al., 2000). Practicing teachers continually learn about teaching practice and pedagogy through various congregations of teacher groups. The professional learning continuum can be supported through “strong teacher learning communities” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), where teachers collaborate to reinvent practice. These communities may support teachers’ development of an “inquiry stance on practice,” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and specific professional learning communities

(PLCs) may be designed to focus on student learning and the use of reflective dialogue (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1997) as a strategy for supporting teacher learning.

These types of professional teachers groups that are collaborative in nature and provide opportunities for cycles of reflection and inquiry can aid practicing teachers in improvement of instructional practice. The underlying “educative” nature of the portfolio process system embedded within a performance assessment may also provide teachers with similar opportunities for learning. Empirical research on student teacher portfolio experiences consistently showcases the portfolio as a tool for participants’ reflection (Borko, Michalec, Timmons, & Siddle, 1997; Wolf, Whinery, & Hagerty, 1995).

Teacher Learning and Performance Assessments

The research cited above illustrates some of the ways teachers learn through collaboration and reflection. Performance assessments in teacher education also comprise cycles of planning, instruction, and assessment which afford a variety of opportunities for both collaboration and reflection.

Teacher portfolios. An early form of teacher performance assessment is found in teacher portfolios. Athanases (1994) field tested a teacher portfolio handbook guide (Portfolio Development Handbook for Elementary Literacy) with 24 elementary teachers. The teachers completed their portfolios in literacy within one school year and participated in two workshop days in June. The portfolio consisted of lesson plans for 3-5 weeks of language arts instruction, selected videotaped lessons from the 3-5 weeks of documented instruction, and samples of student work. The teachers were asked to reflect on successes and problems in teaching their units. Upon examination of one teaching portfolio and the self-reported data from 18 other teachers, Athanases (1994) concluded that in terms of professional growth, teachers valued the

challenges of the project because the Portfolio Development Handbook guidelines asked them to revise their teaching practices. Teachers reported paying closer attention to students' work samples and also reported both group and individual progress associated with this portfolio process (Athaneses, 1994).

Performance assessments for practicing teachers. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification is an example in the United States of a voluntary performance assessment for licensed, practicing teachers. In the U.S., about 1.5% of K-12 teachers attain this prestigious mark of achievement. The National Board certification was created in 1987 by teachers as a way to professionalize teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2012) and as a way to improve the learning of K-12 students (Colvin, 2012). The National Board certification process consists of a performance assessment in a choice of 25 content areas, such as Art, Literacy, Mathematics, Music, etc. This multimedia teaching portfolio is created over the span of several months and includes evaluation of teaching pedagogy, student outcomes, video of one lesson, as well as a three-hour examination at an assessment center.

Hypothesizing that the path to improving learning was through p-12 student learning was through improving teaching; the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards defined what accomplished teachers should be expected to know and be able to do, and the certification process was developed as a way to identify the teacher who satisfies those requirements (Colvin, 2012). The certification process requires practicing teachers to provide videos of lessons, lesson plans, and written reflection.

In a study on the effects of undergoing National Board certification, Sato, Chung Wei, and Darling-Hammond (2008) conducted a 3-year, longitudinal, comparison group design,

looking for evidence of changes in teachers' classroom practice were measured on six dimensions of formative assessment. Sato et al. (2008) found that the teachers who underwent National Board certification improved their teaching, in the area of student assessment, even multiple years after the submission occurred. The National Board certification process helped teachers to connect their teaching to the assessment and see that assessment is multi-dimensional; beyond grades and test scores. Based on administered surveys, National Board participants attributed the positive change in their practice to learning about the National Board standards and connecting their teaching with the assessment tasks.

Nagle (2006) found that collaborative examination of one's own National Board certification process extends teaching practice beyond personal reflection and provides additional learning opportunities in teacher knowledge, investigative practices, and collaborative skills. After going through the portfolio process, the candidates self-reported that they were better equipped to critically examine their teaching and rethink instructional decisions (Pechone et al., 2005).

Rhoades and Woods (2012) found the National Board certification process to be an extended form of professional socialization. Like the edTPA, National Board certification provides specific criteria on what highly qualified teachers must know and be able to do; the teachers are made aware of the standards by which they will be evaluated. Rhoades and Woods (2012) emphasized that National Board certification is a process and the results of interviews with six teachers indicated that most of them found positive changes in their use of class time and in content presentation. In addition, the National Board certification process promotes positive socialization between teachers and administrators, parents, colleagues, and students (Rhoades & Wood, 2012). Teachers reported that an instrumental aspect of the performance

assessment process for National Board was participation in collegial interactions and collegial critique of their video-taped lessons (Sato et al., 2008).

The National Board certification process provides a professional activity where certificated, experienced teachers have the opportunity to analyze their own practice against rubrics. In the following sections, I describe some of the existing performance assessments for preservice teachers.

Performance assessments for preservice teachers. Collaboration and reflection experiences within performance assessments for professional teachers have suggested that these processes can lead to significant teacher learning outcomes. Modeled after the National Boards for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), performance assessments for preservice teachers are used as a strategy to assess a preservice teacher's expertise and improve the quality of teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013). Currently, performance-based teacher assessment has been adopted as a policy tool by some states to determine who enters to the profession but also to ensure that teacher preparatory schools are providing adequate skills for potential teachers. Studies with preservice teachers have suggested that the processes of collaboration and reflection embedded in the TPAs can lead to beneficial learning outcomes for emerging teachers as well. In the following section, I will discuss various forms of performance assessments for teachers in the United States: Teacher Work Samples (TWS), the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT), and the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA).

Teacher Work Samples (TWS). Teacher Work Samples are used by some colleges of education in the United States as an authentic performance task for emerging teachers (Kohler, Henning, & Usma-Wilches, 2008). TWS allows for a reflective exhibit of an instructional unit;

teachers document the process of planning, teaching, and assessing an instruction unit in order to determine the learning needs of their students, to reflect on the teaching and learning process, and to identify ways to grow and develop. The teacher work samples are comprised of units of study that document the complex reality of what teaching entails (McConney, Schalock, & Schalock, 1998). Novice teachers have limited opportunities for stepping back and critically examining their practice (Kohler et al., 2008). After producing a Teacher Work Sample, novice teachers were able to make more sophisticated modifications to their teaching because they benefitted from the opportunity to reflect on authentic learning experiences during their teaching experience (Kohler et al., 2008). The reflection throughout the TWS helped preservice teachers achieve greater understanding of the factors that affect student learning (Devlin-Scherer, Burroughs, Daly, & McCartan, 2007). While TWS has been used as formative, summative, and high stakes assessment, it has been helpful in that it focuses teacher thinking and planning on students and the students' contexts in order to foster student learning (McConney et al., 1998).

While these two studies successfully identified evidence of teacher candidate learning through post hoc analysis of completed TWS, their interpretation of the data relied on completed artifacts with no direct information from the teacher candidates themselves regarding their learning experiences. The studies described above either focus on the reflection section of the TWS (Devlin-Scherer et al., 2007) or on their instructional decisions and modifications as indicated in the TWS (Kohler et al., 2008). Consequently, these authors are able to describe some aspects of what candidates learn but are less informative about the processes through which they learned.

Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT). The Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) was created by a consortium of teacher education

programs in California. PACT arose out of a need for subject specific and authentic assessment rather than a generic assessment for all teachers (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Like the TWS, the PACT is a portfolio consisting of teaching events (TEs) that use multiple sources of data (teacher plans, teacher artifacts, student work samples, video clips of teaching, and personal reflections and commentaries) that are organized on four categories of teaching: planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection.

In studies conducted on the Performance Assessment for California Teachers, Chung and Whittaker (2007) found that candidates learned: 1) the California Teaching Performance Expectations, which are the state teaching standards for beginning teachers, 2) the ability to enact series of connected lessons not planned by the mentor or Cooperating Teacher, 3) how to gain confidence and responsibility as a beginning teacher 4) how to improve teaching if PACT results are received quickly, and 5) the ability to self-reflect and self-assess one's own teaching practices and teaching techniques.

Using case studies and focus groups, Chung (2008) found that preservice teacher candidates who completed the performance assessment as a pilot were able to learn from the assessment. The candidates learned about both their students and their own instructional skills, such as how to address specific learning needs, how to plan a lesson unit, how to assess student learning, and how to modify instruction based on assessments (Chung, 2008). Pecheone and Chung (2006) concluded that PACT as a performance assessment is both a valid measure of teacher competence and a tool for teacher learning. Performance assessments represent candidate learning at a specific point in time (at the conclusion of their teacher education program) but they can also be used for further development of a teacher's pedagogy.

In a separate study, Chung (2008) found that undergoing the PACT process afforded candidates the opportunity to learn about their students in order to address their specific learning needs, plan a sequence of connected lessons, assess student learning and modify instruction based on those assessments. In particular, there are two tools of reflection, the portfolios and peer review, which facilitated preservice teachers' reflections. Portfolios enabled teachers to reflect about the content of their lessons while peer review facilitated teachers' reflections about their use of pedagogical strategies (Pecheone, Pigg, Chung, & Souviney, 2005). Other studies noted that teacher candidates improved in the areas of assessment, subgroup instruction, planning and increased awareness of student behavior (Okhremtchouk, et al. 2009).

The edTPA. The edTPA is a standardized assessment of teaching developed by educators at Stanford University and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). There is a national initiative to make the edTPA available as a tool for state licensure on a state by state basis. It is already required in some states. The edTPA is administered during student teaching and state certification now requires its successful completion in the State of Washington.

The Washington state mandated teacher performance assessment (edTPA) for preservice elementary teachers requires documentation of 3-5 lessons in one learning segment (curriculum unit) in either Literacy or Math. Teacher candidates complete the following 3 tasks of the edTPA during their practicum placement: 1) Planning for Instruction and Assessment, 2) Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning, and 3) Assessing Student Learning. The entire edTPA is a digital portfolio of lesson plans, student work samples, video clip of teaching, and written reflection. Washington State has added a Student Voice component; in all there are 18 rubrics in the edTPA for the teacher candidates.

Although Washington State education policy requires use of the edTPA as an exit assessment to become a state certified teacher, research studies focused on the experiences of those affected by edTPA implementation (student teachers, mentor teachers, and university supervisors) also suggest some collateral benefits of the edTPA (Margolis & Doring, 2013). Margolis and Doring (2013) conducted an early exploratory study to clarify implementation successes and dilemmas of the edTPA. Over a span of five months, the researchers collected data from 10 teacher candidates who were completing edTPAs in Elementary and Secondary Literacy/English. The data included documentation in the form of supervisor notes, supervisor meetings, field seminar class notes, one focus group, and artifacts such as lesson plans. The data suggested that there are prospective benefits to the edTPA related to student and teacher learning; teacher candidates reported greater levels of reflection, enabling them to better focus on their students' thinking. Additionally, the analysis of teaching events by the candidates pushed beyond routine analysis and allowed the candidates to develop more complex pedagogical thinking skills (Margolis & Doring 2013).

In 2013, Liu and Milman investigated the impact of the 1-year implementation of a state-mandated, standardized teacher performance assessment (TPA) on faculty's infusion of multicultural education across a secondary education teacher preparation program. Their qualitative case study included a convenience sample of faculty and courses within one urban university's teacher preparation program. In all, seven courses and nine instructors participated in this study. Additionally, an estimated total of 160 graduate-level teacher candidates and 90 undergraduate multicultural education students were observed across the seven courses. The data were collected and triangulated via observations, interviews, and document analyses. Findings indicated that the TPA prepared these teacher candidates to teach academic language by

requiring them to address their students' language learning needs within the performance assessment (Liu & Milman, 2013). In addition, by asking the teachers to describe the socioeconomic and cultural context of their classrooms, the candidates developed lesson plans that accounted for students' specific backgrounds and special learning needs that resulted in culturally relevant curricula (Liu & Milman, 2013).

In a related study, Lin (2012) used think aloud interviews to investigate the experiences of ten teacher candidates. All ten candidates were enrolled in a one-year teacher certification and Master in Teaching (M.I.T.) post-baccalaureate program in Washington State. During the think-aloud interview, the candidates were given the opportunity to review their edTPA and talk through their experiences with completing each of the three tasks.

One finding from the Lin (2012) study suggested that the student voice requirements of the edTPA process prompted the candidates to provide additional self-assessment opportunities for their K-6 students. The candidates reported learning about student self-assessment in their coursework but teaching their edTPA unit was the first opportunity for them to enact these opportunities. For example, one candidate came to the realization that classroom assessments are not only about allowing her to view her students' progress but allowing her students to monitor and evaluate their own progress as well. Realizing she needed to allow for student self-assessment opportunities was new learning that pushed beyond her coursework. A similar finding indicated that although one candidate's initial motivation was to pass the edTPA, he came to realize the importance of individual student engagement for learning. Finally, all ten candidates commented on the usefulness of videotaping their own teaching; they indicated that this tool is something they will bring into their future classroom (Lin, 2012).

Both of these exploratory studies on the edTPA have documented that some candidates may learn from the process. Moreover, what they learn appears to be highly relevant to the work of classroom teaching, such as modifying instructional practice, focusing on student assessment, and greater levels of reflection (Lin, 2012; Margolis & Doring, 2013). However, these studies do not address how the learning occurs or the contextual factors that may lead to new learning.

Learning from Practice Beyond the Field of Education

Students in all fields of professional education learn from the experience of “doing” the professional work for which they are preparing (Mavis et al., 1996; Tolley, Marks-Maran, & Burke, 2010). Through this enactment of practice in the context of performance assessments, students gain professional development in their respective fields. This concept has been used in educating professionals in healthcare fields such as medical and nursing.

Medical profession. Medical students undergo regular performance assessments within their courses (Brazeau, Boyd, & Crosson, 2002). In the medical field, performance assessments are described as the integration of two or more learned capabilities (Mavis et al., 1996). These assessments are used both formatively within a course and as an evaluative gateway for passing into preclinical/ clinical standing for graduation purposes and for licensure and certification (Adamo, 2003; Mavis et al., 1996). The performance assessments can be Virtual Patient Simulation (VPS) or the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). The VPS can be completed on the computer or with incognito actors who feign ailments or symptoms (Overeem, et al., 2007). OSCEs occur in real time with actors and faculty as scorers who assess medical students’ clinical knowledge and skills (Miller & Green, 2007).

The OSCE is used for 2nd and 3rd year as well as preclinical medical students as a gateway test. Generally, the OSCE is a 5-station timed rotation where medical residents are

evaluated in their skills in diagnosis, assessment, and treatment (Stein, Parish, & Arnsten, 2005). The residents rotate through five stations and are given two minutes to read the station instructions, two minutes to interview the Standardized (simulated) Patient (SP) and five minutes to receive feedback from a faculty observer and their peers. The length of time at each station is variable depending on the skills being demonstrated (five minutes to an hour). Formative or summative assessment can be observed, measured, and analyzed. Written feedback can include score reports, self-assessment checklists, open-ended comment and global rating. Live or remote (audio or videotaped) or feedback can be given by SPs, peers, and faculty (Adamo, 2003).

Stein et al. (2005) conducted a study examining the use of the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) as a formative evaluation tool for substance abuse teaching. The study examined third year resident physicians at a large, urban hospital. A trained rater evaluated the residents as they interacted with patients in a timed, multi-station examination. Evaluation of results and impact determined that learning occurs for both faculty and medical students. For the faculty, observation of performance provided important feedback about whether performance-based outcome behaviors are reflective of programmatic goals. A majority of faculty members (80%) felt that through participating in the OSCE, they gained new insights into resident skills and 62% reported that they acquired new teaching strategies (Stein et al., 2005).

The use of the OSCE for formative assessment allows students to gain insights into the elements making up clinical competencies as well as feedback on personal strengths and weaknesses (Gupta, Dewan, & Singh, 2010; Stein et al., 2005). Medical students find the criteria from practice assessments to be realistic, appropriate, clear and comprehensive. In addition, the process is helpful to their learning; medical students are able to identify their strengths and

weaknesses and the specific skills that they need to improve (Tolley, Marks-Maran, & Burke, 2010).

Medical students also learn through their reflections (Miller & Green, 2007). In a study with undergraduate focus groups, Botezatu et al. (2010) found that pre-medical students reported that knowledge from the exam was more easily retained from a simulated patient compared to textbooks. The exams were didactic: students were able to see where they were fail and where they needed improvement. The exams focused on clinical reasoning but the feedback from faculty provided understanding of theoretical concepts as well.

In an attempt to use the OSCE as a teaching tool for medical students, the OSCE is typically scheduled at the end of their third year (Brazeau et al., 2002). Students are told in advance of the general topics for which they should prepare. Each student performs a ten minute OSCE observed by a faculty member and by peers via video. At the end, the faculty gives a twelve minute feedback; students can also give peer feedback to their colleague. In this fashion, the OSCE was developed first as a study tool then as a hands-on experience. The immediacy of the specific and direct feedback led students to learn about their strengths and weaknesses in clinical encounters (Brazeau et al., 2002). Students also reported it was helpful to observe 10-14 of their peers go through the simulation (and observe other doctor–patient interaction styles).

Nursing profession. In nursing schools, faculty must prepare their graduates for a comprehensive range of competencies that resemble those required in actual health care settings. The Objective Structured Clinical Assessment (OSCA) is used to assess nursing students' comprehensive nursing performance (Bujack et al., 1991). The OSCA comprises assessments of clinical reasoning skills, technical–procedural skills, interpersonal skills, and self-directed

learning skills. An OSCA can be comprised of any combination of the competencies set out and allows nursing students to integrate their range of knowledge and skills and demonstrate using these competencies across planning, implementing, and evaluating care.

Like the OSCE for medical students, the OSCA may be an end-of-course evaluation. For example, if the focus for third year nursing students is mental health, there will be five stations where students receive patient history, interact with a simulated patient, discuss their findings with the faculty member, develop a patient care plan, and finally, evaluate their own performance.

Empirical studies for nursing students (Bujack et al., 1991) used questionnaires to gauge the validity of performance assessment such as the Objective Structured Clinical Assessment (OSCA). In addition, a panel of experts in the areas of nursing theory and practice gauged the learning experience for the nursing students. Based on questionnaires of the nursing students, a majority of students indicated that the OSCA is a positive learning experience. Though stressful, they were highly motivated to study and prepare for it and having live patients made it more realistic. Results for these students, like those for medical students, suggest that nursing performance assessments result in retention of knowledge.

The literature on professional learning in the education, medical, and nursing fields have indicated that reflection, collaboration, and enacting authentic tasks are methods in which adults improve their professional practice. While the primary goal of educational performance assessments is to determine state certification licensure, the literature reviewed above strongly suggests that substantive opportunities to learn for teacher candidates may exist within the edTPA process. These opportunities can and should be leveraged by teacher educators to

improve their candidates' development as professionals. While studies on performance assessments for preservice teachers have identified some emergent findings on what learning opportunities exist within the enactment of the edTPA process, there remains much to be learned about the contextual situations that help facilitate candidates taking up these learning opportunities. This study addresses these emerging issues by investigating the extent to which candidates take up learning opportunities and their contextual conditions which are associated with variation in what and how teacher candidates learn from the edTPA process.

Chapter 3

Method

This mixed method study began with a qualitative case study, which is an in-depth analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In this case, the bounded system is teacher candidates' experience with the edTPA within one teacher education program. My research goals are aligned with Merriam's (1988) main argument for the value of case studies, which is focused on the "discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the great promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education." A case study design allowed for in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. In addition, there is a focus on the process, and on context and discovery, rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1988). The purpose of this design is to inform teacher educators on how teacher candidates may experience, interpret, and potentially learn from the edTPA experience. The initial case studies were followed by two focus groups and a survey administered to the entire cohort. I included the focus groups specifically to capture the instances of collaboration among teacher candidates. The cohort survey was included to see if emergent themes from the case studies can be found in the larger cohort of candidates.

Setting & Participants

My setting was the Elementary Teacher Education Program (ELTEP) at the University of Washington, Seattle. My sites included the teaching practicum placements of my case study subjects and collaboration spaces at the university. The edTPA content area for elementary teacher candidates is either Math or Literacy. The physical setting included the elementary classrooms in the public schools where my participants conducted their field practicum experience. Interviews occurred at the candidates' practicum sites. I also interviewed the

participant's Cooperating Teacher and University Coach to collect data that might be outside the realm of the participant's perceptions. This helped to triangulate evidence from multiple sources of data.

My comparative case studies are focused at the teacher candidate level, and I ultimately recruited seven candidates as my main participants. I obtained a spreadsheet detailing the elementary teacher candidates in the 2013-14 cohort from the program assistant. Although I am drawing from a broader convenience sample, I targeted participants that reflected the diversity of the program; these characteristics include ethnicity, native language, gender, and age/professional experience. I contacted the candidates by email and invited them to participate in my study; if one declined, I moved down the list. I stopped recruiting after seven candidates agreed to participate. The criteria for selection were chosen in order to document and compare the experiences of candidates from different backgrounds as they undergo the process of a performance assessment.

The data collection period spanned four months, with the main event being the edTPA preparation. My case studies were designed to include three interviews with each participant in order to capture data at the beginning of the performance assessment process, in the middle after they have taught their requisite unit to their students, and after they have submitted their portfolio.

In addition to the sequence of interviews with each case study participant, I observed each candidate teach one of their edTPA lessons. Being present during the lesson gave me contextual background information to conduct subsequent interviews. I also used the opportunity to see if their teaching aligned with their lesson plans. By paying attention to the

specific teaching strategies the teacher candidate uses, I was better able to contextualize my interview questions for the candidates.

The ELTEP program required all candidates to attend two Writing Days in May, where they received support around the edTPA. I conducted observations of these Writing Days and looked for instances of peer collaboration because studies have documented that collaboration is one way professional teachers develop (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004).

I interviewed my case study participants' University Coach and Cooperating Teacher; these educators represent social supports available to the teacher candidates as they experienced the edTPA process and it is likely that these educators are sources of new learning for the candidate. As beginning teachers, the candidates are learning to teach through social participation in the proximity of more experienced teachers. My interviews with these support educators allowed me to paint a richer description of each candidate's experiences with the edTPA.

Out of my seven case study participations, I ultimately chose five to present the findings in-depth. These five participants were selected for their variation across gender, ELL status, ethnicity, disability services, and years of professional experience. I have presented the findings of the remaining two participants in Appendix I and Appendix J.

The following table showcases the purposeful variation across the candidates.

Table 1. Teacher Candidate Demographics

Candidate	Race/ethnicity	Gender	ELL	Receives disability services	Years of Professional Experience
Emily	Asian-American	F	No	No	<5
Ted	Asian-American	M	No	No	10-15
David	Latino	M	Yes	No	10-15
Tiffany	Caucasian	F	No	Yes	<5
Lisa	Caucasian	F	No	No	<5
Nancy	Bi-racial	F	No	No	15-20
Amelia	Asian-American	F	No	No	<5

Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

Interviews. The three interviews with each case study subject spanned the four months of data collection. Multiple interviews over time with the same seven case study participants documented changes in candidate thinking over time. Each interview was designed with a different purpose; the first was an exploratory semi-structured protocol designed to elicit personal and professional background from the candidates in order to capture their values and beliefs about the work of teaching and ideas about how they learn. The first interview occurred in March and captured how teacher candidates are beginning to think about the edTPA and how they will go about preparing for this assessment (Appendix A). Since the first interview is exploratory and semi-structured, the participants were asked background/ demographic questions as well as knowledge questions. These are followed by probes in order to clarify information about the participant’s experience with the edTPA so far. An open-ended probe such as “What has your experience with the edTPA been thus far?” was used, so I have baseline data on how and what candidates are thinking about in regards to the edTPA.

The second interview occurred in April after the edTPA lessons are taught in their practicum placements (Appendix B). This second semi-structured interview was designed to

elicit data about candidates' planning: their choices for instructional design and rationales for those instructional choices. I asked questions targeted at uncovering differences between edTPA lessons and non-edTPA lessons. After eliciting a description of an edTPA lesson from the participant, I asked, "How does this differ from a typical lesson?"

The third interview with the candidates was a prompted think aloud (Charters, 2003) experience (Appendix C) that occurred after edTPA submission on May 12th. This "task" interview had candidates looking at their finished performance assessment and reflecting on their thought processes during that time. I prompted them by saying, "Talk me through your lesson plan and planning commentary" and "Tell me what about your thoughts were as you designed the lesson." Each interview was conducted one-on-one in person with me and they lasted under one hour. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

In order to triangulate candidate reported data on their experiences with the edTPA, I also conducted interviews with the participant's Cooperating Teacher (Appendix D) and Coach (Appendix E). These semi-structured interviews occurred after the candidates submitted their edTPA unit. I used semi-structured questions to invite the mentor teachers and coaches to talk about their involvement with the edTPA and the types of support required by their candidate. I asked questions such as "What do you see as the Cooperating Teacher's role in the edTPA process?" and "What type of resources did your Teacher Candidate seek from you?" The protocol of these interviews was informed by my initial interviews with the candidates.

Observations. I observed my case study participants teach at least one of their edTPA lessons in their practicum placement. These lessons lasted 30-60 minutes. Although portions of these lessons were video-recorded by the candidate for possible edTPA submission, I did not

video or audio record them because I did not want to add to the participant's unease at being observed. Instead, I took qualitative field notes (Appendix F), making note of the physical setting, teacher and student interaction, and my own observer comments. These observations allowed me to experience firsthand the participants' teaching, providing me with a contextual background for subsequent interviews. I was able to bring up specific aspects of the observation as a launching point for exploring topics during later interviews.

Focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to draw together a group of teacher candidates to reflect on their experiences with the edTPA. The focus group participants were selected randomly from a larger convenience sample and did not include my case study participants. This debriefing opportunity was audio-recorded and guided by researcher prompts (Appendix G). Morgan (1988) writes that focus group methodology, in conjunction with other methods, works as a form of triangulation within a larger study. By conducting focus groups after my series of three interviews per case study participant, I used the focus group forum as a place to explore issues that came up during the interviews. One of the benefits of conducting focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction (Morgan, 1988). The focus groups allowed me to target a different sample beyond my case studies, and the data was used in conjunction with my case study findings to develop a survey to ask the elementary teacher cohort on opportunities for learning from the edTPA.

Survey. The quantitative component of my study was a cross-sectional survey of the entire ELTEP cohort with the data collected at a single point in time. This self-administered questionnaire captured descriptive data (Appendix H) around the candidates' perception of the ways the edTPA provided opportunities or constraints to their learning. In the survey, I asked candidates to indicate their agreement/non-agreement with statements such as "During the

edTPA process, I planned more deeply than I have previously,” and “On the edTPA, I was able to analyze my teaching more deeply than I previously done.” These questions allowed me to see what else was occurring beyond my intensive case studies. The survey was a quick and low-cost way to provide data that allowed me to see if the inferences from the case studies were also reflected in the general cohort.

Approach to Analysis

The multiple sources of data collected from the case studies were analyzed using a general inductive approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After a field contact (interview or observation), I filled out a contact summary sheet in order to capture my concepts, themes, questions from the contact. A contact sheet allows for the creation of an artifact with my initial thoughts before they are forgotten (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

All interview and focus group transcripts were coded for themes and compared to the observation notes. I used both inductive coding and a start list of codes. The start list was derived from my conceptual framework, research questions, and hypothesis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). My start list of codes included:

- Collaboration
 - Peers
 - Cooperating Teachers
 - Coaches
 - University faculty
- Tools
 - Lesson plans
 - Video of teaching
 - Student Assessment
- Reflection
 - Written reflection
 - After instruction
 - Student work
 - Analysis of teaching

Student assessment

The inductive open-ended coding began after the first interview so that I could use the findings to refine subsequent interview questions. This method also enabled me to find new ideas and add on to my existing codes. The use of interviews and observation data throughout, followed by focus group data and then survey data were used in a sequential manner to address the research questions. For the first cycle of coding, I used what Miles and Huberman (1994) describes as “descriptive coding.” In this method, a word or short phrase is assigned to some data in order to label the basic topic of a passage.

Additional codes were created as I read through the transcripts. The initial codes were used to generate pattern codes that summarized themes from the data. These pattern codes were more general and explanatory as compared to the initial factual codes and included categories/themes, causes/explanations, relationships among people, and theoretical constructs.

In order to strengthen validity and reliability of this study, I used some of the strategies described by Merriam (2009):

- Triangulation- The triangulation of the study occurred at the level of data sources (different people, different time periods of the edTPA), methods (interview, observation, focus group, survey), and data type (transcriptions, field note, survey data).
- Adequate engagement in data collection- This strategy helped me to get as close as possible to the participant’s understanding of the phenomenon- the “educative” nature of the edTPA. By collecting different data sources and data types, and employing different methods, I was likely close to data saturation. When I heard and saw the same information from my different sources, it is likely that no new information will emerge.

- Researcher's position/ reflexivity- I was transparent with participants and others about my role in the ELTEP program.
- Audit trail-This was a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study. The use of data logs, contact summary sheets after each encounter, and coding memos aided in creating an audit trail.
- Rich, thick description- Gathering multiple data sources over time provided enough description to contextualize the study for the readers. The collection of multiple sources of data from teacher educators complemented the participant's self-reported data.
- Maximum variation- My case study participants were purposefully recruited to allow for diversity in the sample selection in the areas of gender, native language, age (professional experience), and ethnicity.

I analyzed the focus group transcripts with the same list of codes I used for the individual interviews. These codes then generated pattern codes to generate themes from the data. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. I calculated the percentage of candidates who "strongly agree" or "agreed" for each statement on the survey.

Chapter 4

Research Findings: Teacher Candidate Case Studies

This chapter reports the findings of the qualitative data I collected for five of the seven teacher candidate “cases.” I chose to focus on these five candidates due to their variation in gender, ELL status, ethnicity, and years of professional experience. The variation in the teacher candidates helped me to understand the similarities and differences in how they approached the edTPA. The remaining two teacher candidate cases are presented in Appendix I and Appendix J. I focused on the affordances and constraints to teacher candidate learning from the edTPA and attend to contextual conditions that may affect variation in the extent candidates take up opportunities to learn.

Case Study of David

David is a Latino teacher candidate in his 30s. He attended elementary school in Ecuador through grade 5. He repeated 5th grade in the United States and continued through high school and university in New York. He considered himself an English Language Learner (ELL) in grades 5-7. He reported that it wasn’t until college that he “really got the writing part down.”

After majoring in Business Management and Psychology and working for ten years as a financial consultant, David enrolled in UW’s ELTEP 4-quarter program to earn his teaching certificate and Masters in Teaching (M.I.T.). It had been years since David had been a student, which he felt put him at a disadvantage in the teacher education program. He also questioned the validity of the edTPA writing prompts, “My point is as an ESL student, I think it’s greater of a challenge and the fact that it’s not culturally responsive- the way the question’s asked and the way the language demands and the writing demands are” (Interview #1).

Contextual Situation. For his teaching practicum, David was placed in a 5th grade classroom in a Seattle public elementary school. I interviewed David three times throughout his edTPA process and observed him teach one day of his edTPA learning segment. The edTPA for elementary teacher candidates are available in the content areas of either elementary Literacy or elementary Math. David was happy when he found out he was assigned Literacy because his school does not have math curriculum. In addition, he said:

I feel like I have great support from Literacy overall in the program. I don't think [math] is being taught [with] culture responsive [ness] and social justice, not that Literacy is- but at least I know more people. I have a lot more resources here whether it'd be at the university or otherwise- amongst my classmates, amongst a list of books, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera that can really support that" (David, Interview #1).

One strategy David used to combat his feelings of being overwhelmed by the task was to collaborate with his peers: "I collaborated with colleagues really well- it's my personality type. Someone was really calm and it really helped my planning a lot." However, he believed the implementation of the edTPA led candidates to feel isolated about the task:

I talked to a few people [peers] here and there...because nobody else can help us, right? The way I see this, it's us. I've been fortunate and frustrated in some ways. There's nobody else teaching at the grade level that I talked to. Literacy-wise, everyone has a different opinion, very subjective, I've gotten great ideas – that's been great, and I think the idea gathering has been wonderful (David, Interview #1).

As far as collaboration with people besides his peers, David indicated that he received minimal support from his Cooperating Teacher and Coach; he said "I contacted my coach, talked to a few different people, and looked at resources online." His Cooperating Teacher "doesn't like to do poetry" which was how David ended up teaching poetry for his edTPA learning segment. David planned his edTPA unit on similes and metaphors in poetry. David shared the following about his mentor teacher:

He did supply me with a copy of Reader's Workshop. He was cooperative but there is a limit to what he can do. There are rumors that some are getting more help from CTs. I did get support but not a lot.

There's no curriculum that said "how you teach poetry" or scaffold the writing process. If you look at it that way, I was really successful (Interview #1).

Cooperating Teacher Greg described David as "definitely prepared for the edTPA" and commentated that his role included, "Narrowing it down. Together we decided that he was going to do some figurative language. Other than that, he did all of the rest of it by himself in terms of finding the resources and designing the lessons" (Greg, Cooperating Teacher interview).

David's Coach Helen reported that he asked her how she taught poetry and asked to see samples of her student work from her classroom. Their conversation revolved around "David trying to understand 'what I need to do to make this [the edTPA] work.'" She described it as a pretty stressful experience for him because "it often blocked him from seeing what was at play in the classroom, because he was so intent on getting a particular thing that, he had to get a particular thing done" (Helen, Coach Interview). Helen related that her candidates don't feel supported by the teacher education program, either in the academic sense or the emotional sense:

More than any other year I felt them relying more on me. They just don't understand what's being asked, and they get stressed. I think that the prompts for them are pretty hard to just get outside of. And they're like "What the hell are these people asking me do?" They definitely feel a lack of connection [with TEP educators] (Helen, Coach Interview).

Learning from the edTPA. The data I collected from David's case reflected several things he had learned through the process of completing the edTPA.

Intensive lesson planning. David's Cooperating Teacher Greg thought the format of edTPA provided an opportunity for David to gain more practice in lesson planning:

I think he was able to see how involved just a five-day lesson could be. I think just to have to go through the entire process of planning and then teaching the lesson, reflecting on the lesson, making changes for the next day, thinking about assessment. I thought that was of great use to him (Cooperating Teacher Interview).

On the topic of planning intensively, with up to 18 edTPA rubrics in mind, David said that his detailed lesson plan resulted in “tighter” lessons. He reflected on his classroom management: “They reacted well. My classroom management was tight; getting their attention, redirecting their attention, kind of engaged. They were engaged in what we were doing, they answered questions, and followed directions, not bored or distracted” (David, Interview #2).

Student assessments. For the edTPA, David created student assessments on a sheet that he would then collect, to ensure that he has tangible evidence to submit to Pearson, the edTPA evaluators. This differed from non-edTPA lessons where he wasn’t as mindful about tangible assessments for every single lesson. As a result, David said:

I saw benefits for my teaching, in a sense, it made me think more critically in being more specific and very intentional. I couldn't leave anything to chance. It made me become super tight with everything. I was being tight with everything. I was being tight from the beginning. My teaching was very tight. It was very much like, this is one minute that I'm going to do this, then I'm going to have them repeat, then I'm going to have them turn and talk. When they turn and talk, I'm going to have them do this, I'm going to do that. So it's very structured (David, Interview #3).

For David, there were positives and drawbacks to a highly structured lesson:

In some ways when it worked, and worked well, it's really great...the kind of response it got from students and everything, but at the same time, it just pushed things. "Well, they're not getting it. I'm still trying to get this done, and it's unfair” (David, Interview #3).

David concluded that his assessment data clarified and quantified his understanding of students’ learning. He said:

It's given me clear data, but the way you structure the assessment is critical. Without a pre-assessment, without a formal, and without a series of assessments, and then a final, finding an end product, it's very different. So you have to be a very strict teacher (Interview #3).

David's coach also highlighted the Assessment Task as a helpful learning opportunity because this area is generally an area of struggle for her teacher candidates. Helen said, "I feel if he had a better sense of how to view student work and assessments to sort of inform his instructional decisions, it wouldn't be such a challenge for him (Coach Interview).

Engaging students. David's edTPA experience enabled him to learn about engaging and maintaining engagement of his students. He described making his lessons "robust" to ensure he was engaging them. He describes his lesson planning process:

I found one –I had my slides and worksheets. I find one that has 2 new balance sneakers "run with heart." I used to be a runner. I know what it means, and what it literally means. Then I'm thinking, "You're an idiot, they are 5th grade, they don't know anatomy- it has ventricles." Second of all, my students aren't runners. I got rid of that image. 40 minutes of work (David, Interview #2).

After realizing that he couldn't plan for himself; instead, he needed to plan from the perspectives of his students. He created a subsequent lesson plan that went over well with his class:

The second image is Comcast, a potato lying on the couch, a couch potato. It's an idiom. I have ELL students. They enjoy TV, playing games. This is a much easier connection. I was making the teaching about me; I have to make it about them. Throughout my writing, my planning, that has been one of the pillars of my writing. Making sure it's about them, making sure it's relatable, every single time. I think that's where I've succeeded it. That's a huge reflective thing; I have made it about them. And then, when I presented a couch potato, they laughed so hard. It was such a connection (David, Interview #2).

David admitted that the edTPA led him to the insight of planning for your kids rather than planning for yourself; although he adds, "these are the things you don't want to admit, I had trouble admitting that, but yea, there are certain things consistently that I'm going to do

repetitively. That came easy for me; it's going to be about them, no question" (David, Interview #2).

Teaching a unit. David told me he never had the opportunity to teach a unit before the edTPA but he qualified his answer as he elaborated on his coursework experience: "Whatever I taught before, a read-aloud here, a piece of math there. I did science- it's painful teaching science... That was the only time I taught a unit" (David, Interview #2). David describes the science unit assignment to be rigorous and unsupported because the candidates were required to develop the entire unit by themselves. David thought where the science unit and the edTPA overlapped was in assessments: to "understand looking at student work and how they separated themselves, knowing how to manage groups, set up groups" (Interview #2)

Use of video. The video component of the edTPA let to some insights for David regarding his teaching:

My materials handling has to be tighter. I have to be explicit with how I see things. I have to narrate. I have to model more consistently. Those are all things that I've been thinking about and I have to do more. When I looked at the second piece of video and my materials handling at one point, it took two minutes to get everyone to have a piece of paper and have them ready. That's because I'm lax on some stuff. There was plenty of time that I wasn't using the academic language that I needed to use. I found myself saying "stuff" and that is not good (David, Interview #3).

The video also altered how his students' interacted in the lessons:

They are very camera shy. Some speak more, but they didn't, but I felt in all the 7 same students throughout edTPA. My last lesson, 2nd time during writing- continuing [the lesson], I didn't have the camera; they were chattier (David, Interview #2).

The video helped him to noticed his classroom management skills:

I see how I manage a classroom and understand different ways to manage. My transitions are not polished- they are awkward. After I'm done, it's like "what do we do next?" Being present and just bounce back. You did this, now do this, the intention and

motivation for what you're going to write. All these things I'm going to see, my CT, and seeing the resources but finally to reach through and say this is what I'm supposed to do here (David, Interview #2).

Insights about Students. After teaching the poetry unit on similes and metaphors, David reached some insights about individual students. He shared:

Creative writing –I realize how challenging [it is] for some. One of mine – [the student with] the IEP, this has provided a platform. He is writing feverishly. Every day he's writing. Some totally flourished over the top and seeing how some struggle, it varies. If I teach science or math, different students struggle. Other students I expected and they delivered. Some students, it's more creative, some more academic to the book; they were turned off by it. Those are the insights (David, Interview #2).

Insights about himself as a teacher. After teaching his edTPA unit, David said "I'm finding out about myself as a teacher, I build a lot of rigor; I have high expectations because that's my personality. For some of them – it was challenging for them, but I appreciate the challenge, that's important (Interview #2). David also has a renewed understanding of assessments as a result: "what I do with assessment. Knowing my students, how I present certain things. Topics that I create" (Interview #2).

The Written Commentaries. Despite David's initial misgivings about the writing element of the edTPA, he reported seeing improvement in his writing throughout the process:

I wrote about 40 pages worth of stuff. I think my writing gradually improved. It was more precise. I think it helped with being reflective, but it was frustrating in the sense that the questions were asked. We were first trying to figure out what the question is asking to figure out how to answer it using their language (David, Interview #3).

Program Support. David indicated that he was not well-prepared for the edTPA and that they [teacher candidates] were not allowed to receive help during the edTPA. David feels

there isn't always alignment between the program's coursework, his Cooperating Teacher's instruction, and the edTPA. David categorized his CT's instruction:

I feel like his instruction conflicts with some of the stuff that I've been learning. It's because he's old school. Not really old school, I mean, he keeps up with stuff, and he does. He's very with the times in some things. But for example, he told me weeks ago that he doesn't like poetry. He's like, "I do not like to teach poetry." So then already, I don't want to do poetry. Then, just last week, he tells me he wants me to do poetry because there are functions on the MSP [Measures of Academic Progress] about it. You know what I mean? It's kind of annoying but it makes sense (David, Interview #1).

David announced his Coach is "awesome" but he also said: "To me it feels like anything that we can ask Teaching Assistants and coaches is really limited because there's only so much that you can do." He elaborated by recounting his interactions with Anthony, a Ph.D. student and Puget Sound fellow: "We ask him ... Trust me, he really wants to help us. He's holding his mouth. He's like, "I can't answer that. I can't. I can't." I'm sure he wants to say more. He's like, "I can't" (David, Interview #2).

David underscored the importance of peer collaboration for the edTPA by saying:

I believe that if I wouldn't have had at least the two people that I worked with, to work with in tandem, even though they weren't teaching the same grade. If I wouldn't have had their support, this would have been a lot harder, and I think for anyone who has to do this, but maybe that's my mentality, you have to have at least one person. I think I was lucky, I had two, and I communicated with other people, because that's how we get through it (David, Interview #3).

Constraints to teaching practice. David provided a specific example that may have affected his edTPA performance by commenting on the constraints of his placement:

I don't have a proper environment to implement it. It's just so much to think about, being in someone else's space. They're not my kids, it's not my room, and the management's not mine. There's things that I do, but I kind of don't see the point of implementing certain assessments, and certain things right now because, it's like ... what am I going to do with it? (Interview #3).

David's Coach Helen gave me a further explanation of Greg's teaching style:

He [Greg] has a very different approach- very didactic and a lot of IRE [Initiate-Response-Evaluate]. It's really different than what David has wanted to do. He goes back and forth in his practice: "Do I fully emulate my cooperating teacher, or do I do some of these things on my own"? Instructionally, the hardest thing that's happened to him is that as he tries to be a little different than his cooperating teacher and his management style, it makes it harder for him to do some of the instruction that he's trying to do (Coach Interview).

In addition, there were situational constraints to David's implementation: "My CT wasn't there and he hadn't been there the week before, so these variables are out of our control"

(Interview #3). David also worried about the demographics of his classroom as these might affect his performance on the edTPA:

As far as my students, they are very diverse ethnically, culturally and [it's a] highly impoverished area in which I'm teaching in. The fact that I have 2 students with IEPs, 2 ELL students that are exiting ELL and I have 6 other students that were ELL. It's a pretty packed class. What are the chances that things aren't always going to go perfectly? (David, Interview #1).

David commented further on the differences between his teaching style and his Cooperating Teacher's style and the constraints he felt in implementing certain classroom procedures such as turn and talks. Turn and talks were not a norm in David's classroom prior to his full-time teaching but he felt obligated to include them in order to fulfil the "student voice" rubrics on the edTPA. David adds:

It's so disruptive to our practice, we are in a fragile place learning to teach and getting our confidence, building relationship with parents, students, the school, everything. This time bomb and it screws things up a lot. It [edTPA] dehumanizes everything we've done. The way, Stanford reaches in and pulls the heart out and sticks a brain and machine in. Very academic, very timed to the second, preassessment, what you're going to teach, you're going to talk to your students, these answers, certain amount of turn and talk, revoice objective at the end, collect your assessment, next day, do it all over again. Robotic, data based...we have to get student voice in a 5 minute clip. (David, Interview #3).

Changes to Teaching Practice. David found the process of the edTPA to be beneficial in his reflective practices as a teacher; he cited many positive changes he imagined taking forth into his teaching:

I see the value doing pre-assessment. I see the value in having structure. I need to see the value in having a consistent flow. These things that just come naturally to my CT 'cause he's been doing it for 27 years. There's things that I've done before, so it's not I hadn't done, but now I had a name on them.

I think there are definitely things that I want to bring to my classroom, as far as having conversations, having them talk to each other. I use the class meetings. I use that sort of discussion and that's not really something supported by the edTPA. Classroom meetings are great to extend the brainstorming and extend the activities that we're doing (Interview #3).

David describes knowing value of assessments and opportunities for student discussions prior to the edTPA, but the entire process solidified their importance for student learning.

Summary. Despite the positive changes to his teaching that David says he will take forward, he still has reservations about the edTPA:

I'm 50-50 on it. Half of it or half of me, or selected parts, are great on how it pushes you to think. It pushes you to put things together. It structures your teaching. It doesn't ask you to. You have to find people to collaborate with. You have to find people to collaborate with really because otherwise you're just overwhelmed. You isolate yourself which I saw happen with my colleagues. That is heartbreaking, how it stresses people out. That's the bad part of it (Interview #3).

Case Study of Tiffany

Tiffany is a young Caucasian teacher candidate from the ELTEP 2013-14 cohort. She is from North Carolina where she majored in fashion, design and development. She taught in Mexico last year as a member of AmeriCorps and that was when she decided she wanted to teach elementary children. She described her motivation to switch career paths:

To work with kids in poverty was kind of the thing that hits you the most because you could see the difference. I think the thing that hits me even now is that the number one thing for kids to do to get out of poverty is education. That's been my drive throughout is realizing that you can make a difference by education to break that cycle.

In Mexico, I was just looking for experience, and I realized that I enjoyed what I was experiencing with the students, the relationships, and just to grow- being there over time was amazing. This is what I want to do. It didn't matter what age they were (Tiffany, Interview #1).

Tiffany told me she receives accommodations for her Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and learning disability; her struggles in literacy extend back to elementary school:

The writing - that's been a struggle throughout my academics since third grade. [My disabilities] affected a lot of things but I think the writing is where I am most concerned. I'm in teaching but how am I going to explain if I don't have a sense of understanding? (Interview #1)

Tiffany describes her reservations about her ability to communicate through writing as well as teaching content to her students when she may be shaky on the comprehension herself. Both of these ideas do appear throughout my case study with Tiffany.

For her edTPA, Tiffany taught a math learning segment on measurement to her kindergarteners. Her teaching placement was in an elementary school in North Seattle's suburbs. Tiffany told me she was on an improvement plan because she needed more time to fulfill the requirements of the program. Although she anticipated finishing one quarter after her cohort, she still wanted to complete the edTPA with her cohort. Her coach, Caitlin, told me that Tiffany's improvement plan allowed her to focus on one subject, "Math was her subject. Paul, her CT, has given her extensive feedback in math. I observed her a bunch in math" (Coach Interview). Paul described Tiffany as "someone who has a lot of passion and dedication to the process, and the aspiration of becoming a teacher. The skill bank is still very emerging skill level. So there's a different kind of effort and attention that she's getting" (Cooperating Teacher Interview).

After teaching her edTPA lessons, Tiffany wanted to debrief with her Cooperating Teacher but was unable to have such an outlet:

The big thing was afterwards, I wanted to ask him, "Where are the students at?" Because he understands more about their level of thinking and things that I'm not seeing. I wanted to ask questions to my teacher but we can't, right? That piece and not going over it with him, that process usually helps me- just saying it out loud and just bouncing ideas. That was different (Interview #2).

Tiffany told me she relies heavily on her Cooperating Teacher's feedback after she teaches a lesson. On the edTPA, it was the first time she was left to make teaching decisions on her own.

Tiffany's university coach concurred that Tiffany required a lot of scaffolds to implement a lesson:

I did an informal [observation] mid-February and was kind of shocked that it was just kind of a mess. In talking to her cooperating teacher, what came out was that he really helped her and when I going and seeing these great lessons, the lessons were a lot of his work (Caitlin, Coach Interview).

Her Cooperating teacher Paul listed all the aspects Tiffany may potentially learn from the edTPA: "Time management. Composition skills. Assessment. Administration, tools, monitoring, data interpretation. Short and long range planning. Differentiation. And, linking the lesson group to other grade level examples of that same process (Cooperating Teacher Interview).

Learning from the edTPA. During her edTPA, Tiffany planned very detailed lesson plans; she included transitions, areas where she needed to elaborate more, and incorporated her script into the actual plan. She thought that level of planning was beneficial in some ways:

I suppose there is a big benefit but sometimes you feel like you can't detach from that but it is good support. I still struggle with that- if it's helpful or not. I definitely think it's helpful because I go back and highlight things that I want to say but in the moment, it can be kind of challenging. I tended to change in the moment based on the students, which is good, but sometimes it's not always the best thing, I've realized (Tiffany, Interview #2).

Above, Tiffany describes the tension of having to “stick to the script” versus allowing the lesson to take a natural progression based on interactions with the students.

Tiffany’s performance on the edTPA provided an educative experience for her. She commented on receiving additional supports from faculty due to her disabilities and how that enabled her to enact the lesson planning component of the edTPA:

I like to see the big picture and the little pieces in it. I actually got individual help with my Literacy instructor so I could understand even more. Once I understood that, it was important because it shows I'm building on it but also had to break it down. For me, it's to stick to the objective, which can be challenging when you're teaching (Interview #1).

In our second interview, Tiffany had further insights about the educational experience of the edTPA for herself:

The development of it...having those three [lessons] build on each other and whole group and individual [focus students]. They [students] only have this amount of time to learn this big idea. Realizing how much I need to work on that as a teacher- my timing was a big thing. I learned a lot from it for sure and to have an experience on my own for three days was good practice for me (Interview #3).

Caitlin also thought the learning segment component of the edTPA was a good experience for Tiffany:

I think it was really great for her to have three to five lessons, a series of lessons to put together. I think Paul really allowed her to do what she needed to do with the curriculum during that time, so I think she was able to then incorporate some of her creative ideas with the curriculum. It seemed like, actually, a good time for her to figure out what it meant for Tiffany to be a teacher rather than being Paul's protégé at that point (Coach Interview).

Tiffany also had new insights about her students' learning. She described to me one student who didn't follow along to what Tiffany demonstrated on the projector, but the student was still able to arrive at the lesson's objective of creating a bar graph:

The goal was to create a bar graph and to collect data so, technically, she did that. Which was interesting but it worked for her. When she counted, it worked for her. That was more important to me. She still understood what needs to be done. That was really, powerful for me; they can figure things out on their own (Interview #3).

Video. While watching the video of her teaching, Tiffany noted areas for improvement:

Many of my questions I noticed were “yes and no” questions. They [students] are developing their own learning. Less teacher talk. Trying to understand more of what they were saying to connect. I noticed that I didn't do that quite enough, even just “What do you think he said?” (Interview #3).

When Tiffany analyzed her teaching, she noticed challenges her teaching may have created for her students:

I'm just not very explicit when I'm teaching to students. They're not following me. Am I giving too many steps at one time? Part of it is, I think, having ADD is really challenging, being a teacher. Having really bad ADD I just get sidetracked easily or hyper-focused on things I don't need to (Interview #3).

Another revelation from the videos was that Tiffany noticed she was talking a lot, time-wise, and that she needed to give her students opportunity to “explain their thinking or explain how they're solving a problem.” The writing prompts from the instruction task prompted her to look for evidence of student talk.

Beyond her teaching practice, Tiffany also thought the video was helpful in other ways:

In task one, I realized the importance of the big idea. There's so much I feel like I don't know still that I need to know and understand to be a better teacher for them, connecting better (Interview #3).

Ultimately, Tiffany changed her teaching based on what she saw in her videos:

I focus a lot more now, I have changed; it's more of the students trying to tell me with their face. Checking in more now. "Does this make sense?" They all want to have the "thumbs up," too. I think just how I view them is different now than it was before, which is really focused on them more than myself, which I think is important (Interview #3).

Analysis of Teaching. The way Tiffany analyzed student work for the edTPA also changed her view on her teaching. She explained, "A big part was I needed to do more assessment in between to make sure they're on the right track. Understand the student better, what their needs are. Even just small check-ins." She described the tension between helping students master the objective and time constraints:

The other possibility is to slow down my instruction, but there's always that piece of me of not getting enough done. Learning that balance was a big ... If they're not getting it, do we just slow down and just look at the data and not worry about the graph? That's the goal- to get the graph, but you only have this much time. That was big for me (Interview #3).

Tiffany said, "My big learning is 'What do I do in this situation?' That was something I think I still need to invest a lot more into thinking to be a good teacher." Her Cooperating Teacher and Coach and noted previously that this was an area where Tiffany struggled:

Some of the things we just noticed were superficial understandings of content, not deep understandings of pedagogical content knowledge and we also saw her not really be able to, in the moment, do some of that thoughtfully adaptive teaching. She should have a plan, but when the kids didn't get it, she was concerned about where to go, what to do (Caitlin, Coach Interview).

Reflection. The writing prompts forced Tiffany to stop and reflect, which allowed her to see small but beneficial changes in her teaching:

You're reflecting on what didn't work, what is the classroom management? Those are small changes. Honestly, you have to prepare for the next day. You have work to do and it'll stop you. You see the benefits but then it's just really hard to accept right then. It just forces you to stop and think more about everything you've learned, too (Interview #3).

We have all this writing, you have to do it. Really, you think more on a different level because you're thinking about the school, you're thinking about their culture, and you're combining it with your lessons and all these pieces, I think that it's helping me for sure (Interview #2).

Summary. Post edTPA, University Coach Caitlin has seen changes in Tiffany's teaching:

She makes visuals for almost every lesson and now, they're just posted all over the room. The energy of edTPA, I would say that started with edTPA. She's taken that word wall and she's made it hers for writing. Even though it was for math originally, now she has a word wall so she's attending to language and other subjects, not just math. The other thing I think she learned a lot of is assessing and analyzing student work.

She was thinking about each kid and she was really thinking about looking at each kid's work. It comes down to really determining and telling kids your assessment criteria; before she didn't articulate what she wanted and when she was looking at work, she was just kind of looking generally at it, but I think that edTPA might have pushed her to look critically and specifically at certain aspects of student work. I would have to say some of those prompts and what edTPA was asking for were pushing her thinking (Coach Interview).

Tiffany described how the edTPA pulled the various facets of her learning together:

You go to school and you study all these things on how we need to teach, then we come in here and we do those things. We're just there, at a different place, and you think you're meeting them, but you're not. At least I'm not, I don't feel like it a lot of times. I think that's how this thing is really changing my teaching, the edTPA.

Beyond the shift in her thinking from teacher moves to a focus on student learning,

Tiffany also said:

I think we've got more tools, like turn-and-talks and certain things they've given us. I know how to fill in time; now I can focus on them more. If I have the tools and strategies and I know how to use them, and I know when they're needed, then I can be with the kids more. What I mean by "being with them" is just really understand them and help them grow. (Interview #3).

Despite this, Tiffany concluded on a bitter note:

The edTPA was such a good experience. I didn't pass, which was confusing in itself, because you don't really get feedback. The whole process was good to experience, because you can understand different pieces of yourself in teaching, what you need to be thinking about.

I will tell you now that I definitely think that U-Dub did not prepare us at all. I think that was part of me failing- being unaware of so many things. The biggest thing is that I didn't know I was going to write 80 pages, and you're teaching, and you're trying to balance.

They kept being like, "You'll be fine, you'll be fine," and I wasn't fine. I think that was just disappointing (Interview #3).

Case Study of Lisa

Lisa is a Caucasian teacher candidate in her 20s. She went school in the Seattle area and earned her B.A. from the University of Washington, Seattle where she majored in Psychology and Communications. She comes from a family of educators and knew early on that she was interested in pursuing education as a career. When Lisa was an undergraduate student, she volunteered with AmeriCorps Jumpstart, where she taught children at an orphanage in Africa.

Lisa enrolled in UW's ELTEP 4-quarter program to earn her teaching certificate and Masters in Teaching (M.I.T). During her teaching practicum, Lisa was in a second grade classroom in a Seattle public elementary school. She was assigned math as her content area for the edTPA. I interviewed Lisa three times throughout her edTPA process and observed her teach one day of her edTPA learning segment. Throughout the duration of my study, Lisa consistently presented a positive outlook of the edTPA.

During my initial interview with Lisa, I learned that her school placement offered no math curriculum. Thus, she relies on her Cooperating Teacher and the rest of the second grade

teacher team for ideas and resources. Her first step is to look at Common Core State Standards and plan her lessons from there.

Lisa describes her assignment of an edTPA in math as follows:

I'm a little nervous about implementing a lesson. It was a random assignment for literacy and math, and I personally think literacy is more my strength. I think doing math for this assessment is it's more of a challenge just that I'm not as confident in my teaching math as I am in literacy (Interview #1).

However, Lisa placed a positive lens on this circumstance:

It can be a little challenging when I don't feel as confident in that area, but also I think it's a good learning opportunity for me to better see my strengths and weaknesses in math and how I can change that for upcoming years because I've always been teaching math in school (Interview #1).

Lisa was looking beyond passing the edTPA and thinking about the skills required for her future teaching. In the ELTEP program, Lisa was able to plan for a learning segment but the edTPA was the first time she had the opportunity to implement a sequence of lessons:

In our math methods course, in literacy too, we had assignments where we were supposed to plan out three to five lessons, but it wasn't as in depth as I would say for the edTPA. It was, 'What would you do? Give us an outline of what would you do.' It was, 'I would discuss this topic and talk to children about this.' So doing it for the edTPA was a lot more work than what we did for those (Interview #1).

Lisa's university coach Caitlin described her as a teacher candidate of high-caliber:

She had submitted some writing reflections to me in regards to student data, providing feedback to kids; it was so clear and thoughtful. I gave her feedback but it wasn't like I needed to coach her through, I felt she was really ready for a lot of what edTPA asks (Coach Interview).

The edTPA and non-edTPA lesson plans. Lisa described planning five lessons for her edTPA learning segment and anticipating that "if I didn't like one of them, I can take it out" (Interview #1). Her lesson planning was more involved than non-edTPA lessons:

After I had a skeleton of what I wanted to do, I started looking at the planning template for edTPA and looking at the different parts that are needed for that... make sure modifications, thinking about my language, the parts of the language, academic language that are needed. Then, I went about creating my lessons, the two page lessons that are needed for that (Lisa, Interview #1).

Here, the 18 rubrics of the edTPA are used a tool to map out the lesson plan in order to ensure they are incorporated into the lesson. The effects of these requirements were described by

Lisa:

It just differed [in] the amount of time I put in because I was looking at the rubrics while doing this, whereas when I just teach a lesson that isn't for the edTPA, obviously there are certain components I use. For the edTPA, I feel like there's just so many rubrics that needed to be involved in your instruction and in your planning templates that I felt like I was constantly looking at those (Interview #1).

She describes her thought processes after a lesson:

After doing a lesson or while in the moment [of teaching], it just felt like those rubrics were always in my head, so I feel like I was consistently thinking about the rubrics, whereas if I'm just teaching a regular lesson, I have my learning target I want to hit, but it's not like I'm focusing so much on making sure that I'm building a rapport with students. That's something that's always built in, but with that being one of the rubrics, I'm always second guessing myself, like, "Well is this showing? Positive rapport. Is this not?" I'm sure it is, but in the moment, it's kind of like, "Are the students, do they look engaged? Oh, that student's playing with their thumbs. Is that going to affect something?" (Lisa, Interview #1).

Despite the differences in the number of explicit requirements between an edTPA and non-edTPA lesson, Lisa does point out similarities between the edTPA and her formal observations with her University Coach. For example, on lesson plans that she gives to her coach, Lisa said:

They're very similar. I'm using basically the same format that the University of Washington has shown us with my lesson plans. There's a little less because you're

supposed to do the rationale and the student descriptions in separate sections, but it's the exact same format that I use for my coach (Interview #2).

Learning from the edTPA. The data from Lisa's case revealed several practices she learned through the process of completing the edTPA.

Video as a reflective tool to improve teacher practice. Lisa told me that that video-taping her edTPA learning unit did not faze her second graders:

I don't feel like it was really that much different for my students because I've taught lessons before where I was using a video camera. I told them this was for an assessment, teachers would be seeing it- maybe they straightened up a little bit, but for the most part, they kind of stayed the same way. Maybe they're just used to it because of all my projects I do where we're video-taping (Interview #2).

Unlike the other teacher candidates in this study, Lisa drew clear connections between the requirements of ELTEP's courses and components of the edTPA. The required video-recordings offered an opportunity for Lisa to reevaluate her teaching:

In the moment [of teaching], I always felt like, "This isn't a video that I can use," but after watching them and looking over the rubrics, I find that I'm like, "Oh, this actually does, I hit the rubric in this area." As much as it's not really fun to watch yourself be video-taped, it actually was more comforting for me that I'm actually hitting these targets. In the moment, when thinking about all the rubrics and everything for edTPA, it was a lot of "I don't think I'm doing this right," and then after re-watching myself, being like, "Oh, I am actually. I'm capable of doing this." I feel like I really hit the points (Interview #2).

Reviewing her own video-clips also allowed Lisa to produce concrete next steps to her teaching:

One thing I think I could've done better is, at least in the beginning videos, it's kind of hard with second grade and the lesson I was teaching, but I know the rubrics hit a lot on just understanding; understand being more than just giving an answer. It's about applying this to other situations or applying this to stuff outside the classroom. I guess that's something I did try to really work on after watching the first two videos is expanding my answers of more than just asking like, "What does this mean, or what does this graph need," and students would be like, "a label." More of asking questions about like, "Why

do we interpret this data? Why did we learn about three graphs rather than just one?" (Lisa, Interview #2).

Lisa describes her desire to have her students conceptually understand her lessons' objectives, rather than repeat facts back to her and to have them be able to apply that knowledge in their life:

Having students see a bigger picture and how this relates to their own life is something that I worked on more as I watched the videos...making sure I'm asking more questions that aren't just having them reiterate information to me, but show me a conceptual understanding of that (Interview #2).

All in all, Lisa found it worthwhile to review her videotapes:

I do think it was helpful to watch myself teach. But once you have these questions [the rubrics] in mind, it was just fine tuning. Like there were different areas, where I was like, "Oh, I'm doing this consistently." There were other areas, I'd be like, "I did this only one video and this is an important thing for my students learning. How can I do that more in next lessons?" (Interview #3).

Reflective analysis of own teaching. Beyond the use of videotapes as a tool for improving her teaching Lisa, also shared that writing as a form of the reflection process was helpful in analyzing her teaching:

I do actually, looking back at it now, especially with the assessment commentary. I feel like that really made me look and analyze my data the most. The assessment piece really allowed me to analyze my teaching because it made me really look at what I had the students do and their understanding of it and it was just interesting because you make piles of "who really gets it," "who kind of gets it" and "who's not getting it" and then just seeing the patterns from that of how it's happening because they them had similar patterns of why they weren't understanding the materials. So that really helped me reflect on my teaching of what I could do better to teach this subject. For example, the graphing that I did, a lot of them were forgetting to label the sides of the graph, so that made me realize that that's something I need to talk about more in my teaching. So reflecting that way was really helpful (Interview #3).

Lisa shows that she is thinking about her future classroom and how she wants to conduct assessments:

I really like the assessment pieces [of the edTPA]. With my feedback, I actually gave feedback to about six students, just to see different students' answers, which I thought was really important. I like the conferencing aspect of that, I don't know how it can be done with a class of 24; I know it can be done. The conferencing is something I really want to do but I feel like it's something I need to ease into my classroom as I gain my classroom management skills.

So there are aspects of edTPA like the assessment and the instruction that I really want to add in but I feel like I just need to strengthen my classroom management skills as a teacher before I can add this stuff in, such as the conferencing (Interview #3).

Lisa spoke of other ways the assessment task of the edTPA influenced her view of teaching:

It really made me realize how important small groups are and it really made me think more of how I group students because usually when I do a unit, I give a pre-assessment and based on that pre-assessment is how I do my grouping. But it made me realize how you can and how it's still beneficial to group based on say, giving a daily assignment and grouping based off that and then the next day, hitting those point.

Once they start learning the material, I might find that the students who were put in a pile with students who didn't understand the material at all, are beginning to really grasp it and they could actually be moved to a different small group. I found how beneficial it was to group daily versus for a whole unit (Interview #3).

Lisa speaks to the importance of having fluid groups day to day within a unit of study. Beyond student work, she also used oral conferences with students as a form of assessment:

With my three focal students, I gave feedback verbally. I talked to them in the hallway, which was also very beneficial because just having that one-on-one really changes how I perceive the students- how I perceive how they understood the problem (Interview #3).

These oral conferences provided evidence that differed from the student work:

Talking to some students who did well, realizing that they were actually kind of nervous about it and other students who I thought did well, thought it was going to be easy, were telling me how easy it was and gave me ways that I could challenge him more, which I thought was really cool. But you don't really get that from just written feedback if you don't talk to the students. Having their voice and their opinion was really helpful (Interview #3)

Besides assessments, the edTPA also prompted Lisa's attention to academic language:

The edTPA really made me think more about academic language more than I had in the past. Academic language, for some reason, I really struggle with; figuring out what are some things I need to focus on in my students.

There was one lesson where I did a Venn diagram where I had students compare and contrast the vocabulary of a picture graph to a bar graph. I liked the idea of using a Venn diagram to talk about vocabulary and so it was really good for that lesson. One thing I wish I would have done in that edTPA more and in my teaching in general is sentence stems. I don't use those as often as I would like, but I feel like they're a really good academic language piece. So I guess edTPA just made me realize my lack of academic language and how much more I need to add it into my lessons (Interview #3).

Summary. Overall, Lisa describes the edTPA as “a really good process and making me think about what to think of as a teacher, such as with the assessments, with the grouping.” In fact, she found positive effects on her teaching during the last couple months of her student teaching placement:

It's so beneficial now... watching myself teach was really beneficial to see and trying to answer the questions of building a positive learning environment, just looking for that made me really think as I teach [going] forward. The instruction section, if I'm really doing that in my class, am I challenging my students with these questions or are these just superficial questions? (Interview #3).

Her coach Caitlin shared some of the differences she's seen in Lisa teaching pre and post edTPA:

I've definitely seen consistently, since TPA, for her student self-assessment; asking them what they learned, why they feel it's important. Exit slips. She usually has two exit slip questions about the process of learning or about what they learned. I just co-taught a Social Studies lesson with her and one of the things that she had was an exit slip on the back that seemed very edTPA appropriate. I have been kind of pushing her to think about assessment in that way, but I don't know if it's the end of year, I don't know if it's edTPA, but I felt like things are cementing for her (Coach Interview).

Lisa concluded with:

During the time, I was really stressed out and wasn't enjoying it but we got our scores last week and I was fairly happy with that. I did better than I thought so, looking back on it

now, it was a stressful time but I think it was actually beneficial for my teaching and made me think about things more than I would have if I hadn't done edTPA, I think. I think this whole program in general, like just meeting with your coaches and the assignments we've done always makes me think more about my teaching than I would if I didn't have those classes (Interview #3).

The learning she will take forward as a new teacher includes:

On the edTPA were stuff that I should always be thinking about as a teacher, especially with the instruction commentary; questions like how do you challenge your students? Those kinds of things, how do you help such and such students? As a new teacher, there's so much going on with classroom management and instruction, that it's kind of hard to always focus on how am I challenging the students but the edTPA made me realize how much more I need to think about the questions I'm asking, whether it's a superficial question or whether it's actually a question that's going to deepen students thinking and challenge their thinking (Interview #3).

Lisa had a strong focus on looking beyond merely passing the edTPA to picking up skills required for her future teaching. Despite receiving a math content area, Lisa put a positive spin on the assignment; it's a good learning opportunity to showcase her strengths and weaknesses in teaching math because she anticipates having to teach math in coming years. While the data does not illuminate Lisa's values on the edTPA, it is clear she saw it as an opportunity for growth.

EdTPA as a tool was very educative for Lisa. She describes the reflection and writing process as beneficial; the assessment commentary in particular helped her to look at and analyze her data from the students. She was able to distinguish nuances of mastery between her students and see the patterns of what was occurring regarding her students' learning.

The videos of her teaching were also instrumental as a learning tool; she used what she saw in her videos to plan concrete next steps in her lessons. Through the playback of her lesson, Lisa realized she needed to ask conceptual questions, noted both where she incorporated edTPA rubrics and where she had missed opportunities for the rubric elements.

Case Study of Nancy

Nancy is the mother of two teenagers and has a range of experiences working with children prior to her enrollment in the ELTEP program: she has homeschooled a child with special needs, has been an active participant in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and a volunteer in the classrooms of her own children.

Nancy is biracial with two immigrant parents from Denmark and India. Although she speaks Danish fluently and learned French in school, she does not consider herself an English Language Learner (ELL) because her parents always spoke English at home.

Her Cooperating Teacher, Rita, a National Board certified teacher, described Nancy as very knowledgeable in social emotions and pedagogy, as well as effective in building relationships with her students. Her University Coach, Abigail, is teaching associate from the university. Abigail described Nancy as a very dedicated and hardworking candidate who struggled to find success as a novice teacher; as time in the field placement increased, Nancy faced difficulty in juggling the demands of teaching and coursework.

My very first interview with Nancy occurred at the beginning of the school year, in October. In that initial interview, I asked about her experiences with the edTPA thus far. Understandably, she didn't know much of the details at that time, but she had faith that the ELTEP program would prepare her adequately with what she needed to know.

During spring quarter, Nancy officially became one of my case study participants. Our first interview occurred in March, after content areas for the edTPA were assigned. Nancy indicated that she was pleased with her content area of math because she felt her math coursework at the university adequately prepared her and aligned well with what the edTPA

expected. She stated that she was “surprisingly confident” and commented that her peers in the cohort made the edTPA out to be “a big deal.” Nancy also said that she approaches most events in life as a learning opportunity and the edTPA would be no different.

Contextual Situation. Rita understood her role as Cooperating Teacher to be minimal during the edTPA process. She describes her didactic methods with Nancy thusly:

Ahead of time, I saw my role as in helping her learn to plan lessons, helping her learn to set objectives, reflecting with her on lessons that I was doing, giving her opportunities to do those lessons, and then reflecting. So I did a lot of metacognition, a lot of going through the curriculum. Together we did a lot of co-planning ahead of time related to math. Well, related to everything at the beginning (Cooperating Teacher Interview).

Likewise, Nancy’s University Coach Abigail reported that the support she provided was meant to help Nancy be successful in her student teaching: “It was never just about the edTPA. It was mainly about her development as a teacher.”

When Nancy found out her edTPA content area in math, Rita made sure to start spending time with her on math planning, to the exclusion of other content areas:

Once she knew that her edTPA was math, I started to spend time with her on math planning...more in-depth. Because we don’t have enough time to go into the level of depth that Nancy needs with every subject” (Cooperating Teacher interview).

While Rita has seen positive improvements in Nancy’s teaching, she attributes that to her being in the field placement longer and having had more experience.

Nancy expressed that edTPA fell at an inopportune time- right as she started full-time teaching, and she was unable to handle both the demands of full-time planning and teaching and the edTPA. A couple of weeks in, she had to admit to her Cooperating Teacher that she needed help, which was a difficult step to take. Rita replied “absolutely” when I asked if the edTPA detracted from Nancy’s learning. She said it would have been better if it had been implemented

during winter quarter when the candidates are on their placements three days a week: “I do think this process [edTPA] is kind of holding her back...from being where we want her to be, where I want to be. I think it’s hard for her to manage both those pieces.” As a National Board certified teacher, Rita stated that the planning for the edTPA was so in-depth and the time for just that short week isn’t representative of what the job entails. While the process was good for Nancy’s reflection, it’s “not necessarily the ticket to build a room, or manage a classroom on a day –to-day basis.”

Abigail concurs with this sentiment by saying “for someone like Nancy in particular, the time of the test, which is very high stakes, fell at a time when she was ramping up in the classroom. She was feeling very overwhelmed....and there is an anxiety in participating in the process of doing the edTPA that shouldn’t go overlooked.”

Beyond support from her Cooperating Teacher and Coach, Nancy also sought help from other sources. She describes:

I did talk to peers. A lot of it was mostly morale stuff but we did have one meeting, a couple of us, where we brought our plans and we just sort of bounced off each other. We gave each other half an hour, 45 minutes to say, “Okay, where are you at?” and “What are you thinking?” (Interview #2).

Nancy was thankful for the fellow teaching candidates at her school placement; not just because of their carpool together, but also because two other women were mothers as well and she felt emotionally supported by them.

Learning from the edTPA. Nancy describes the fourth lesson in her edTPA learning segment as “a real blow.” She intended to have her students apply the conceptual knowledge they have been learning the first three days, but she realized she had not set them up for success:

I had chosen a small group lesson to talk about how they solve the problem and their thinking. . . .to walk their math partner through their problem on how they solved it. I realize that in all my math talk, I have never really asked them to do that step by step (Interview #3).

Although Nancy and her CT had used math talk in the months prior to the edTPA, they had never explicitly taught their students the steps for a pair-share math talk. She recounts the moment of her revelation: “It was really truly [during] my edTPA lesson. It was the first time doing that. I realized that in that moment and then what do you do? It was like, “Oh, man. I wish I realized better earlier.”

The edTPA also helped Nancy connect components of her university coursework with teaching. She noted: “I’ve been saying the objectives more together at the beginning and throughout [the lesson]. It really helps. I know we learned this in class but to see it happen with the students” (Interview #2). She uses the objective as a way to activate background knowledge and during turn and talks, she gauges their understanding:

I was listening in and my 4 groups were saying how much faster it was [to use base 10]. I still had 2 or 3 kids not doing it. I literally had that one-on-one conferring with one student. Really, that individual conferring helped them make that connection.

That was powerful. It was great to have had them articulate why, the objective and how they felt after. That’s a whole another management. It’s a lot of management. I’m growing there in just being able to manage it all (Interview #2).

The use of video as a teacher reflective tool. Nancy describes watching the video of her teaching as “super helpful.” She watched the instruction portion over and over, looking for evidence of her skill-set and realized “what I think I do and what I actually do, sometimes don't align” (Interview #2). She elaborated with:

The hard part for me in watching my own videos is not to be critical. Really, that’s the thing for me is to not get down on myself about maybe what didn’t go so great or what I could’ve or should’ve done because you have these ideas later. It’s about really trying to see what it is and what the problems are. I tell myself that when I sit down. I even come up with this mantra to focus myself on. My objective is to find this student voice today

or to find conceptual understanding in proof of engagement. I try to be very positive but it's hard because I know I'm hard on myself. Like I said, it's just hard (Nancy, Interview #2).

Individual differentiation for students. After Nancy had planned and instructed her edTPA learning segment, I had observed her teach one of the lessons within her edTPA unit. In our subsequent interviews, Nancy related the story of Thomas (not his real name), a student in her class, to me twice- both in our second and third interviews. Thomas is a student who generally struggles, but during the edTPA math segment, Thomas said, "Ms. N, math was fun today." She had differentiated the math content for him and given him one page with two math problems and plenty of white space. Nancy said:

It was a big learning moment for me as a teacher about differentiating and really making it look doable right off the get-go for them...Really, what I had done so different that day was creating a lot of space in the paper and very few problems. I could see that the morale was like I hadn't seen before. Really, the student came with enthusiasm and fun, used the word "fun" (Interview #2).

Improvement in planning math content lessons. During our second interview, Nancy shared that due to all those hours spent working on the edTPA, she feels that she is a better lesson planner in math. She stated her Cooperating Teacher relieved her of the workload in other subjects so she can focus mainly on math. Nancy felt that out of the three processes of teaching: Planning, Instruction, and Assessment, planning was her weakest area; not for lack of ideas but for her overabundance of ideas that makes it unrealistic and difficult to implement within a lesson's allotted time.

Rita and Abigail (Cooperating Teacher and Coach) also thought that planning a "tight lesson" was a challenge for Nancy. Her coach reported that she generally went too broad and consequently, had difficulty implementing the lessons: "Just clearly identifying a learning

objective and then writing a lesson plan that would support kids, particularly first graders, to achieve that objective was something...it just a big learning curve for her” (Abigail, Coach Interview). Nancy’s Cooperating Teacher said that throughout the year, one of Nancy’s definite growth areas was in lesson planning and long term planning. While Nancy came in with a lot of experience teaching in various environments and was strong in classroom management, she struggled to plan instruction for curriculum with which she is not familiar. There were many scaffolds put into place during spring quarter (full-time teaching) because the increase in responsibility was overwhelming for Nancy. Abigail described what was critical to Nancy’s development: “she needed explicit conversations for which the outcomes were some sort of scaffold that we put into place” (Coach Interview).

Due to coaching from her Cooperating Teacher and University Coach, Nancy also shifted in her thinking that planning for “a lot” within her lessons plans is not necessarily ambitious teaching. Instead, there is value in simplicity and making sure her first graders have enough time to grasp the concepts. A revelation she had after the edTPA was the value of “depth over breadth,” because she saw that her intensive planning for her edTPA unit on two-digit addition and regrouping saw real gains in the students’ unit test.

Focusing on depth over breadth of content. During our third interview, Nancy again spoke of depth over breadth in her lesson planning: “Really taking one content area, like say, the ‘place value’ piece of my [edTPA] week, and doing that for several days, is probably what will serve my students a whole lot better. Cognitively and developmentally because of where they are at” (Interview #3). Nancy’s Cooperating Teacher Rita corroborated this sentiment when she told me the learning gains were clearly evident in their students’ math unit test. Rita thought that the process of the edTPA was a helpful learning experience for Nancy: “as far as the process of

really going through and laying out the objectives, and doing all the research, was really helpful for her in implementing her lessons and units. The level of work that went into planning those...those 3-5 lessons was very intense and very in-depth, which gave her more confidence” (Cooperating Teacher Interview).

Summary. During our final interview, Nancy reflected on specific components of the edTPA that she imagines taking forth in her teaching. She said, “What edTPA taught me: if you can really invest in doing research and spending hours on a week worth of lessons, it pays off” (Interview #3). Similarly, the edTPA experience required her to put more time into providing students with feedback. She noted that normally, close examination of student work is not something she spends “nearly enough time doing.” She commented on her feelings about videotaping: “I love video-taping. I didn't like it when I started. I really didn't, and still there are a lot of things I don't like” (Interview #3). Lastly, she hopes to include opportunities for student voice in her future lessons: “It's something I really want to do more of, but I am still right here working on just making sure I do my closings to my lessons” (Interview #3).

Case Study of Amelia

Amelia is an Asian-American teacher candidate in her 20s. She attended school in the Seattle area and earned her B.A. from the University of Washington, Seattle. Though bilingual, she does not consider herself an English Language Learner. Amelia enrolled in UW's ELTEP 4-quarter program to earn her teaching certificate and Masters in Teaching (M.I.T.). During her teaching practicum, Amelia was placed in a kindergarten classroom in a Seattle public elementary school. She was assigned math as her content area for the edTPA. I interviewed Amelia three times throughout her edTPA process and observed her teach one day of her edTPA

learning segment. Throughout the duration of my study, Amelia consistently presented a negative perception of the edTPA.

During my first interview with Amelia, she said that she was nervous about the edTPA process:

It [edTPA] was really foreign thing -- still is a really foreign thing. It just seems like a huge standardized test for us now. Now that it's mandatory, it seems pretty high stakes and difficult to do, especially since every one of us has something ... our experiences are a little different. I don't know. I'm nervous (Interview #1).

Some of the anxiety stemmed from the unknown; Amelia perceived that the messages from the ELTEP program were mixed and confusing. Amelia attended the workshop session for those candidates with math as a content area for the edTPA:

I was asking a bunch of questions...I know my [student] groups are different. We're being told different things because it's hard to really pinpoint. Each of us needs something different, which is hard on us. But these big group meetings don't really -- they can't help us in that way (Interview #1).

Amelia felt that specific questions about her student teaching context could not be addressed in a group of almost 30 candidates.

I asked Amelia about any opportunities to learn from the edTPA, and she replied with a blunt and incredulous “no.” When I asked Amelia about the purpose of the edTPA, she replied that the purpose was to see if teacher candidates are capable of “the step-by-step process of planning a learning segment, planning a unit maybe. Instruction- see how we're teaching and how we're helping our students, and then assessment, see how to improve your teaching” (Amelia, Interview #1). Interestingly, Amelia’s university coach also brought up the nature of the learning segment in my interview with her:

I think through the edTPA process one of the most invaluable things that all teacher candidates learn is the cycle of what we might call learning, so the important part about planning, and then instructing, and then reflecting. I'm certain that's one of the things that Amelia, if she didn't identify something that she learned, I would sense that was one possible beneficial thing for her (Erin, University Coach).

Contextual Situation. Despite naming the purpose of the edTPA, Amelia offered a plethora of reasons she saw the edTPA as a constraining assignment in her practicum placement. Amelia said that for every day (that is, non-edTPA lessons), she writes a “pretty generic lesson plan.” In the daily plans, she knows in her own mind how she is differentiating, but the lessons plans for the edTPA requires that she writes out the differentiation and explain it in more detail. While the timing of the edTPA coincided with the beginning of full-time student and spring break for Seattle Public Schools, the timeframe worked in Amelia’s favor and allowed her to choose a curriculum unit of her preference:

I wanted to get it done before spring break so I would have a little bit of extra time in case anything went potentially wrong. And I didn't want to wait too long and push it any further. I like [the topic of] classification because it just fell into that week just before spring break...Because positioning is next, and I didn't want positioning, because I wanted something I could write a lot about (Amelia, Interview #2).

The busy schedule was also a concern brought up by Amelia’s coach Erin, “Amelia was one that was worried about coming back from spring break, trying to jam in her videotaping, and then running into the problems with the standardized testing schedule (Coach Interview).

As she stated, Amelia was fairly intentional in choosing a topic in math that she would have plenty of write about. While planning her learning segment, she made sure to over-plan so she would have plenty of artifacts to choose from to present as her evidence. When I asked how many lessons she planned for her edTPA unit, she said, “I actually did a lot of trial stuff because I never knew what it was going to be. I did that kind of planning for a couple of lessons, but I have a feeling three [lessons]. I did [videotaping] Tuesday to Friday. I took a video on Monday

because I wanted to see what it was like to video it.” Although she intended to submit a total of 3 lessons, she told me, “But I have 4 videos. As a back-up” (Interview #2). Amelia planned edTPA-caliber lessons as a trial run but didn’t intend to submit them all.

When I questioned Amelia on how she modified her district mandated curriculum for her edTPA unit, she said, “I didn't use the first page of these worksheets. I supplemented it by making the big posters that you saw and then lots of note cards and lots of manipulative.” She described the edTPA lesson I observed as “a lot hands-on, more visual stuff” (Interview #2). She implied that her decision in providing large visuals and using math manipulatives was driven by what she thinks the edTPA scorers wanted to see. As a result, Amelia admitted that her edTPA lessons didn’t feel natural:

I probably am just not very comfortable in front of the camera, but because the edTPA was asking for very specific things, the lessons themselves did not feel natural to me. Therefore, I felt like I couldn't talk to them [students] in the same way. I had to change a lot, just in regards to what they were asking of me. All those prompts. I just didn't feel very right (Interview #2).

Amelia believed there were structural disadvantages in her student teaching placement. She commented that the edTPA is an ill-fit for her Kindergarteners. Amelia references the exit tickets that allow for student voice; a student chooses from a range of happy to sad faces to indicate their perceived level of mastery of the lesson’s objectives:

I honestly think the EdTPA was not a good match. This is a very personal thing for kindergarten, because if I asked someone a question... there was one child who can get every answer correctly, but she would never circle a happy face on the thing (Interview #3).

Learning from the edTPA. Amelia was the only candidate in this study who reported she was too busy during the edTPA process to learn from the experience. While most candidates generally find the edTPA planning task to be more detailed and elaborate than their day-to-day

lesson plans, Amelia implied to me that this resulted in “busy work.” Amelia described her own typical lesson planning practice and also claimed this was typical of other candidates: “We might do one lesson plan, a week's lesson plan, write down the main points, but not to this extent” (Interview #2).

Since Amelia taught small group learning center, she recounted her planning procedures for her edTPA week:

That actually took more time finding stuff for everything else which is funny, because I feel like I really want to mention that but I know it's not part of this lesson plan, because I really need to write about this one, but a lot of time was actually spent on that stuff. It was an interesting week. It required a lot of money and a lot of hunting for stuff. More than 9 hours of hunting for things, but I felt like the kids really learned a lot and they were really, they seemed happy and more engaged than I had seen them, because I gave them a lot of stuff to work with (Interview #2).

Amelia’s intensive planning was borne out of a desire to keep her kindergarteners occupied so she could teach her small groups without disruption.

Amelia’s negotiation of the demands of the edTPA was compounded by her quest for a perfect video clip and a desire to cover all the rubrics.

Video. I observed Day 2 of Amelia’s edTPA unit and assisted in filming three group rotations for her, even though she was pretty sure which group she wanted to submit as her edTPA learning segment video. Before she began teaching her direct instruction group, she gave strict orders to the students at the desks and computers that they were not allowed to come up and ask questions. When, inevitably, a student forgot and approached her, Amelia asked me to stop filming. Throughout the multiple group rotations, this continued in the same vein; I was asked to stop the camera when a student didn’t respond to a direction or cue. Her impetus for her actions was to capture a “good” video clip to submit. Amelia said:

That was the first time I tried the camera there and I told them everything about it, I was really open with them. It's always been a little bit crazy as they rotate around, but I also gave them the rule of "you cannot come up to me" so they knew, they just kind of stay away. I very heavily differentiated each activity to try and alleviate that (Interview #2).

Meeting the edTPA rubrics. Amelia interpreted many of the edTPA rubrics as excessive:

I went beyond. I did everything in case. Instead of one assessment, I would have two. I would do the personal assessment and summative. I will also have exit cards. Instead of one visual, I would have three. Instead of vocab cards on the table, I put them behind me [on the poster] (Interview #2).

Amelia's teaching choices were driven by the edTPA rather than what she thought would be best practices for her students. Amelia justified these choices by saying, "I'll use the white board with some and vocab cards with others. Just to protect myself" (Interview #2). She covered her bases by including every strategy that edTPA scorers may look for.

Student voice. Regarding student voice rubric, Amelia mused, "Student voice, I wasn't even really sure what they even needed, wanted. I could've asked my students, "What did you learn about today, what did you think you could do better?" (Interview #2). In fact, she stated she usually asks her students, "What did we learn about today? Thumbs up, thumbs to the middle, thumbs to the side. But for the edTPA, "I just added lot of things, with the posters, visuals, cards ...exit cards. I don't always do the exit cards" (Interview #2). For the edTPA, she collected summative assessments even though she feels they are not the best fit for her students.

Amelia references the workbook from the district-provided curriculum that is aligned with Common Core State Standards:

I know these students pretty well and I know if they're having an off day or if they're not listening or if they are seated in a spot that doesn't really help them. The summative assessments, those worksheets are not a good fit, because [the students are] in all these directions but they know the content. Try and find other ways to assess them, whether it's

a different worksheet or something more informal. Asking them a question (Interview #3).

Furthermore, Amelia felt her analysis of her edTPA lessons did not aid in shedding light on her students:

When I was analyzing, I saw specific patterns but they fell in line with things that I've already been tuned into. I knew the children who would need a little bit more visual support and knew the children who might not be able to write everything (Interview #2).

Differentiated small groups. Amelia allowed the edTPA to pull her away from her students. She loaded up the other student learning centers with engaging math games so she could film with her direct instruction group. Despite having her Cooperating Teacher in the room, Amelia said:

I knew I wouldn't have anyone else in the room, the amount of a lot of the stuff I did for the other groups, normally I would be juggling all of them, but it was really hard to not be able to go over and help with the computers, because it was center space learning, a lot of kids I just could not help them in any way. I had to focus only on these kids and it left out some other kids (Amelia, Interview #3).

While she felt learning centers are ill-fitting for her group of students, Amelia felt compelled to continue on due to the wishes of her Cooperating Teacher. In fact, Amelia externalizes responsibility for her teaching decisions on her Cooperating Teacher, "I personally don't think the centers work very well with this group. Because of this class, I had to do it. Maybe for a different class it would have been fine (Interview #3).

Overall, Amelia's negative edTPA experience was exacerbated by the need to plan and teach full-time:

My mind was so tired from, I would be here, I would do everything like any teacher, then I would have to go home and write, sometimes until late. It would take away my sleep. It would take away my concentration. My head would hurt. You can only do so much in a day. By the time I get here in the morning, I'm exhausted. That's how I felt it actually

took away from my ability to be the best for these kids, especially since we work full-time (Interview #3).

The edTPA writing commentaries. During my third interview with Amelia, I asked if the role of reflecting and responding to written prompts affected Amelia's thoughts on her planning and instruction. She replied, "They didn't really change much" (Interview #3). She continued to say she didn't learn anything new about her students as a result of the edTPA process. She describes the constraints of the edTPA: "I felt like there were a lot of rules to what I needed. The extra videos... I don't need 6 assessments. I would still be doing everything the way I did; that was just like normal" (Amelia, Interview #3).

Furthermore, Amelia perceived the edTPA writing prompts were not aligned with her teaching. Amelia said, "I felt like I was just trying to figure out what they were trying to ask me. I didn't feel like they were genuine. I didn't think it was very beneficial." For non-edTPA lessons, Amelia makes quick notes-what she calls a "brain dump" in her journal at the end of the teaching day. For her edTPA unit, she said, "I did what I normally do right after or as soon as I could. I would fill out the prompts later. I didn't find it to be very connected."

Summary. After catering to the edTPA, when asked if she learned anything new about her students, Amelia said, "not really." When I asked if her thoughts on planning and instruction changed after finishing the commentary for both sections, she said, "I don't think they really changed that much" (Interview #3). She said her thoughts didn't change much because even without the edTPA, she would be teaching the way the same way. In all, the data from my interviews with Amelia suggest that she viewed the edTPA solely as a gateway assessment and did not leverage any other value from her participation.

Chapter 5

Cross Case Analysis

While the individual cases present a detailed accounting of each focus candidates' learning experiences with the edTPA, this cross-case analysis pulls together similarities and differences among candidates using Rogoff's sociocultural lens. The five cases in the cross case analysis were selected for their variation in gender, ELL status, ethnicity, and years of professional experience. The variation in the teacher candidates helped me to understand the similarities and differences in how the three "planes" played out differently for each candidate.

The Personal Plane: Motivations of the Teacher Candidates

Without a doubt, all five candidates held the primary goal of passing the performance assessment. The types of other motivation displayed by the candidates helped me to interpret how each one approached and was affected by the edTPA process. I interpret the motivations of the candidates to be distributed around two dimensions.

On one dimension, the candidates exhibited important differences as to how they viewed the purpose(s) of their participation in the edTPA. Some candidates viewed the edTPA solely as a requirement to be completed in order to receive state licensure as teacher. Lave and McDermott (2002), drawing on Marx's work on estranged labor, argued that current social practices of learning and education have commodified learning to the point that learning has become a product to be exchanged for external rewards. In the context of this study, "learning becomes embodied in a credential and being credentialed is a thing to become" (Lave and McDermott, 2002). With "alienated" or "estranged" learning, the learning is external to the scholar because it is coerced and demanded as a condition of access and participation in valued roles.

While all candidates were motivated by the external function of the edTPA as a requirement for certification, some also viewed the performance assessment as an opportunity to learn skills they could *use* in their teaching practice. That is, rather than seeing the edTPA as a hurdle to be cleared solely for the purpose of receiving the credential, these candidates approached the edTPA process with the mindset that the experience could positively impact the development of their teaching practice. I conceptualized this distinction between learning for *exchange* versus learning for *use* as a continuum along which I could interpret one dimension of the variations in candidates' motivations for completing the edTPA

A second dimension of candidate motivations around the edTPA experience centered on whose needs was at the foreground in edTPA planning. Some candidates chose to plan and implement their edTPA lessons in a way that attended primarily to their perceptions about what they needed to do in order to pass the assessment. Other candidates planned their implementation of the edTPA in a way that reflected more careful attention to their students' learning needs in addition to the requirements of the test. These motivations affected how each candidate negotiated and adapted the edTPA experience within their classroom context.

Learning for “exchange”: Passing the edTPA. Amelia and Tiffany clearly viewed the purpose of the edTPA as a gateway assessment and performed in ways to obtain a passing score with minimal regard for other factors. During our first interview, Tiffany told me she had math as a content area and that math “wasn’t an [area of] strength in school.” However, she added, “I honestly wanted literacy but I’m just pretty open because I think either way it’s going to be a fine or a good experience. I haven’t really been worried about the subject, necessarily (Interview #1). For Tiffany, producing the edTPA was an ambitious goal because she was on an extended program, but she wanted to experience the edTPA with her cohort.

For Amelia, she spoke of her teaching decisions as requirements dictated either by the edTPA or by Cooperating Teacher. For example, on the edTPA, Amelia taught her students in small groups as they rotated through 15-minute learning centers. She told me, “My Cooperating Teacher and I started doing centers in January” (Interview #3). She added, “With the edTPA it's really hard to teach content for 15 minutes” (Interview #3). She referenced the edTPA rubrics: “all the work that the students are doing- it's supposed to be related, so it's this much bigger picture and I'm supposed to hone in on [the rubrics] in such short lessons” (Interview #3). She thought it would be easier for other teachers to implement the edTPA because “for upper level [grades], the edTPA lessons are 40-50 minutes” (Interview #3). Amelia stated her 15 minute lessons were limiting: “That is really hard to get video for and really hard to teach, too, because I have to fit all the materials, the transition time, and content for differentiated into such a short amount of time” (Interview #3).

Amelia structured her lessons in a way to minimize distractions while she was teaching and filming with her edTPA group. She reported it “required a lot of money” and “more than 9 hours of hunting” to plan lessons for the independent centers. Her motivation was to keep her students occupied so they would not disrupt her while she was instructing and filming. In fact, she implemented a new class rule by telling students: “you cannot come up to me.”

Improving their teaching practice. While Nancy and Lisa were clearly concerned with passing the edTPA, they also saw the edTPA as an opportunity to learn about themselves as a teacher. Nancy greatly values learning; years after earning her Bachelor’s degree and becoming a parent, she said, “I would say that I’ve not stopped learning, and I continue to learn not in a formal but rather informal educational sense” (Interview #1). Regarding the edTPA experience, she said, “I think there will be plenty of opportunities for learning because I’m always looking to

learn” (Interview #1). Nancy sees all life events as a learning opportunity. Through the edTPA, Nancy was very animated about how well her students performed and attributed her students’ learning to her detailed planning (differentiation, engagement, and depth over breadth for content matter). While Nancy’s Coach and Cooperating Teacher discussed Nancy’s difficulties with juggling many responsibilities and planning a streamlined lesson, Nancy’s perspective was that her student teacher experience was filled with learning opportunities.

Likewise, Lisa saw the edTPA as a learning opportunity; Lisa used the experience to pick up as much learning as she can for her future as an elementary teacher. She stated, “I personally think literacy is more my strength. Doing math for this assessment- it's more of a challenge; just that I'm not as confident in my teaching math as I am in literacy (Interview #1). However, she also saw the edTPA as a good opportunity to build her skillset in teaching math: “It can be a little challenging when I don't feel as confident in that area, but also I think it's a good learning opportunity for me to better see my strengths and weaknesses in math and how I can change that for upcoming years because I'll always be teaching math in school” (Interview #1). During our first interview, Lisa noted another opportunity the edTPA experience would provide her:

Also a learning opportunity on the edTPA really- there's such a focus on assessment. I can really be able to focus on my student's learning and see what they understand and don't understand in terms of graphing. Which you do as a teacher all the time. I think just because there's so many prompts about student assessment that it's really going to let me dive in and get to know my students learning in this sense (Interview #1).

Negotiating edTPA requirements within the classroom context. David, Nancy, and Amelia explicitly mentioned being concerned about capturing and maintaining student attention for their edTPA learning segment. This motivation to have a compliant class led them to enact their edTPA in specific ways; by planning with student interest in mind. However, it appeared David and Amelia were primarily motivated to engage their students due to their desire to have

well-behaved students in front of the camera. David was cognizant of the standards with which he will be evaluated on the edTPA:

All these things that a lesson should be, which is providing language supports, running different types of directions, considering all your students, having assessment in the lesson, having introduction, having ways to engage, having formative and summative, having all these things (Interview #1).

In talking through his planning, David said, “I made my lesson robust- I wanted to make sure I was engaging them” (Interview #1). David commented on filming everything in order to have evidence for the edTPA rubrics, “Analyzing my teaching and knowing that I’m answering these questions and to be able to have that two minute piece of video. In a one minute discussion with two students, I was able to answer one question [on the edTPA]. That’s huge” (Interview #3).

Like David, Amelia showed great concern about making sure her students were engaged but, also like David, her underlying motivation for insuring high levels of student engagement appeared to be driven by her worries about her edTPA performance. She spoke at length about her planning decisions to ensure an orderly classroom, “I gave them the rule of ‘you cannot come up to me’ [while I’m teaching] so they kind of stay away. I very heavily differentiated each activity to try and alleviate that (Interview #2). Amelia demonstrated that she was strategic in occupying her students while she was filming with her small group.

In contrast, while Nancy also expressed concern about her students’ engagement, she told me she chose to teach regrouping with double digit addition because it is a “very, very important math concept.” She told me she “debated between that and the first 3 units of that unit” but she ultimately made her choice because “double digit addition is really critical for where they’re going the next year- that they understand this concept of 10 and a group of 10 and base 10 in math” (Interview #1). Unlike David and Amelia, Nancy’s lesson planning decisions were not

primarily influenced by the requirements of the edTPA rubrics and how she can teach in order to provide evidence to the edTPA scorers. Instead, her primary focus on the edTPA was to impact student learning. Nancy was evidently successful in adapting the edTPA requirements in a way that also addressed the learning needs of her students because she reported, “My kids did beautifully on that unit test” (Interview #3).

The personal motivations of each candidate’s approach to the edTPA are represented in Figure 2 below. The horizontal axis represents the range of how the candidates conceptualized the purpose(s) of the edTPA with regard to the tensions between “exchange” and “use”. Amelia and Tiffany fell on the left end of the continuum because their primary goal was to pass the edTPA. There were no data indicating they approached the edTPA experience as an opportunity to learn. Lisa and Nancy are on the right end of the spectrum because they explicitly stated that they believed there were opportunities to learn within the edTPA experience.

The vertical axis represents variation in candidates’ negotiation of the requirements of the edTPA rubrics within their classroom context. Some of the candidates (Lisa, Nancy, and to a lesser extent, David) developed their lesson plans with the needs and interests of their students at the forefront. Amelia and Tiffany did not indicate such motivation; their planning decisions catered to the edTPA requirements in ways that would favorably impact their scores.

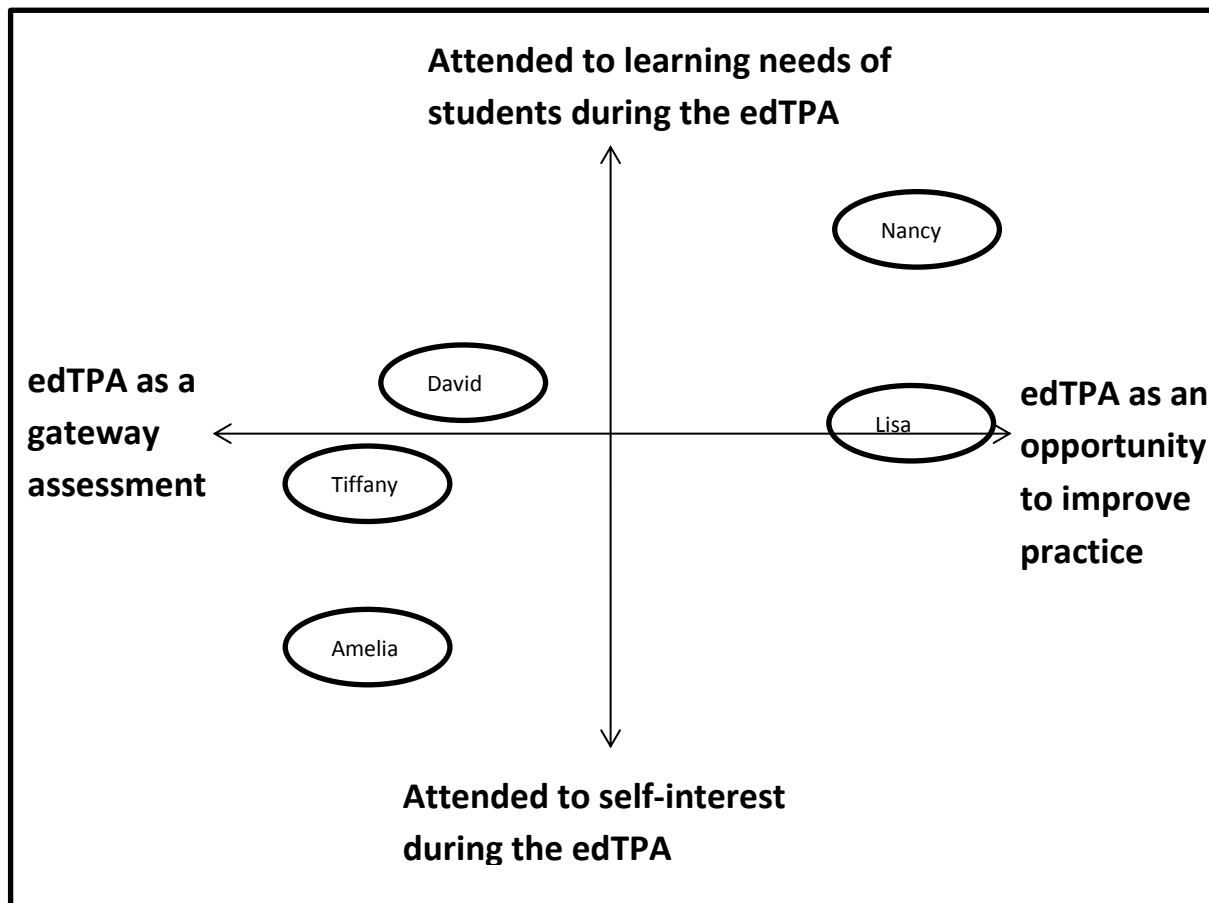


Figure 2: Personal Motivations of Teacher Candidates’ Approach to the edTPA

The Writing Demands of the edTPA. While the writing demands were personally difficult for all candidates, three candidates in particular (David, Tiffany, and Amelia) specifically raised this issue. The writing demands were one instance of the contextual conditions that may affect how candidates experience the edTPA. That is, for some candidates, their personal histories and dispositions with regard to writing appeared to distract them from opportunities to learn.

David is the only ELL candidate in this study, and he was most vocal about the writing demands of the edTPA. David’s difficulty in writing English stems from his cultural background; he said, “As an ESL student, the writing part has always been difficult for me. I

[find] myself being overly verbose, doing a lot more narrative writing because it's my culture and it's how I speak” (David, Interview #1). He said the prompts were confusing and that the candidates spent their collaboration time figuring out what the question was asking and what an adequate response should be. In addition, he shares it has been 10 years since he has been a student, “I haven’t been a student for a long time- since 2004” (Interview #1). He implies his younger peers in the cohort have an edge at taking tests and producing long papers. David’s concern about the writing demands and his possible weaknesses obstructed him from experiencing opportunities to learn.

Tiffany admitted writing has been a struggle “since the 3rd grade,” given her learning disability. On the edTPA, she struggled to understand the prompts and produce the required commentaries in the time allotted. She explained feeling overwhelmed from experiencing edTPA and full-time student teaching at the same time, “The biggest thing is that I didn't know I was going to write 80 pages, and you're teaching, and you're trying to balance (Interview #3). Tiffany implied there was no time for her to learn from the edTPA process because the writing demands of the edTPA required a lot of her attention.

Amelia is not an ELL student nor does she have a learning disability. However, Amelia told me that the writing demands of the edTPA “took away from my sleep. It would take away my concentration [at school]. My head would hurt” (Interview #3). Like Tiffany, Amelia experienced time constraints in her edTPA experience that may have obstructed learning opportunities. In fact, Amelia argued, “I felt like it [the edTPA] took away from what I could've given my kids” (Interview #3).

In addition, Amelia thought the edTPA prompts were confusing and awkward, “I just felt rather than me just naturally reflecting, I felt like I was just trying to figure out what they were trying to ask me. I didn't find it to be very connected” (Interview #3). Amelia struggled with the writing commentary because she did not have any perspective on what this edTPA activity may afford her in terms of future skills for her classroom. Consequently, she told me repeatedly that she found the writing prompts to be not “genuine,” not “beneficial,” and not “very connected” to her teaching, which made it unlikely she would experience opportunities to learn.

The Interpersonal Plane: Variation in Collaboration

Four out of five case study candidates (David, Tiffany, Lisa, and Nancy) accessed other people as resources for learning through “guided participation.” The systems of involvement between these individuals included each candidate’s Cooperating Teachers, Coaches, fellow peers, and spanned both face-to-face communication as well as virtual distance interactions.

Peer collaboration. The collaborations that took place among teacher candidates were distributed across several goals: content support, emotional support, and clarifying questions and gaining information about school context.

Content support. David and Nancy were the only candidates who reported seeking content support from peers for the edTPA. David stated, “I collaborated with colleagues really well- it’s my personality type (Interview #2). As such, he organized a collaborative session with his fellow teacher candidates for idea generating and as a forum for bouncing lesson ideas off each other. David reported on the quality of the peer support:

It really varies. I’ve been fortunate and frustrated in some ways. There’s nobody else teaching at the grade level that I have talked to. Literacy wise, everyone has a different opinion, very subjective, I’ve gotten great ideas – that’s been great, and I think the idea

gathering has been wonderful. To be able to talk things out, that's my personality, as a supporter to talk things out, and "Does this make sense, does it not?" (Interview #2).

Nancy also describes herself as a people person, and she shared her edTPA lesson plans with her fellow teacher candidates at her school site:

At first glance one of my peers just said, "Whoa!" I mean she was just taken aback. I had actually told her in advance, "I think I'm doing too much." She right away agreed, "Oh yeah, it's like you're doing a lot" (Nancy, Interview #2).

Nancy was grateful that three out of the four candidates at her school placement had math as a content area on the edTPA. Since Nancy's placement was in 1st grade, she reported it was helpful to learn what her colleagues are teaching at 2nd and 3rd grade in helping her understand the curricular trajectory across vertical grade levels: "Some of the same concepts are just spiraling in terms of developing kids' conceptual understanding and fluency in these areas" (Nancy, Interview #2).

Nancy said she doesn't have the "time and energy" to be on Facebook, but she has heard "conversations that go on and they [her peers] connect with similar topics (Interview #1). Nancy remarked that unlike her younger colleagues, "I don't have a problem asking for help" (Interview #1). She thought that it would be helpful to take university class time to organize peer supports: "Use a moment to announce 'Who's teaching fractions, who is teaching money?' That doesn't exist yet but I see that is a potential way to connect with colleagues" (Nancy, Interview #1).

Emotional Support. For some of the candidates (Tiffany, Lisa, and Nancy) another function of the peer support was morale boosting. Tiffany and Lisa are at the same school placement site, and they connected both virtually and in person: ""We were e-mailing about the stress. Two days ago, we met" (Tiffany, Interview #2). Tiffany listed the most challenging aspects of the edTPA: "I think the writing because I struggle at that, in general, and staying

focused. That's been kind of a fear... not fear but just anxiety and reaching out for support” (Interview #2). Tiffany recounted a different encounter with her two colleagues from her school placement that led to additional support in helping her stay focused: “I was out running at Green Lake and the two of them are just sitting on a tree, I was like, “What in the world?” and just going over there. The emotional piece of it. We were all trying to stay focused” (Interview #1).

Nancy reported, “I did talk to peers. A lot of it was mostly morale stuff (Interview #2). Nancy reflected that her strong relationship with her school placement peers went beyond convenience: “It’s interesting; my reasoning for feeling close to these people is not so much that we share the same school. I’m really thankful because Annika and I carpool” (Interview #2). The other two women at Nancy’s school placement “are moms so we have this other shared interest that we sometimes talk about” (Nancy, Interview #2).

Of course, Nancy also thought it was beneficial to receive emotional support from her colleagues who understood her school placement:

It’s really for all of us overwhelming, but then this program is that intense. I think in terms of how you connect with your peers, that is, I think it’s nice to have somebody who understands what you’re going through, at least in our building, developed some relationships with that you can talk honestly about in terms of feedback (Nancy, Interview #2).

Clarifying questions & gaining information about school context. Since Tiffany and Lisa were placed at the same elementary school, Tiffany described the benefits from that particular collaboration: We met and she was helped me with some of the questions I had and then we shared information about what we knew about Crestwood [Elementary]” (Tiffany, Interview #2). Tiffany also alluded to gaining help in deciphering the requirements of the edTPA: “From them, it was understanding what the question is asking” (Tiffany, Interview #2).

Lisa concurred with this view of the function of the collaboration: “Last night, I asked her a couple questions about some stuff, some clarifying things” (Interview #2).

The role of Cooperating Teachers and Coaches. David was the candidate who asked for and received the most curricular support from his Coach and Cooperating Teacher. He received the Readers Workshop curriculum from his Cooperating Teacher, and student work samples on a poetry unit from his University Coach. Unlike some of the other case study candidates, David did not indicate any hesitation in requesting curricular support from his Coach or Cooperating Teacher.

Some case study participants indicated a tension in requesting edTPA support. Tiffany, Lisa, and Nancy, were careful to tell me they did not ask for a lot from their respective Cooperating Teachers. While Lisa stated that her school doesn’t have a math curriculum, she disclosed the following:

I'm using my CT as a source; asking her and the other secondary team, "What have you done in the past to do this unit?" I'm not really sure of where the line is, because I know this is supposed to be my thing. She's been giving me stuff. That's the big support (Lisa, Interview #2).

Tiffany is at the same school as Lisa, and Tiffany affirmed that she has “combination Every Day Math and Common Core” math curriculum in Kindergarten. Both Tiffany and Nancy were adamant that they didn’t ask their Cooperating Teacher for help. I asked Tiffany if she sought support from Cooperating Teachers or university faculty, and she replied, “No, because we can't. I don't do that. Well, I've used their information though if that's what you mean. Like their notes they've given us in the class (Tiffany, Interview #2). When I posed the same question to Nancy, she stated, “Well, I didn’t ask my CT. The only thing was commentary- commentary about how I’ve got to keep it narrow (Nancy Interview #2).

Amelia did not indicate she collaborated or sought any resources from her peers, Coach, or Cooperating Teacher.

The Institutional Plane: edTPA as a Cultural Activity

The edTPA functioned as a tool-mediated social and institutional process which engaged most of the candidates in learning about their students and their practice. For David, the writing prompts provided a lens for his reflection about his lessons and the writing also prompted him to become more efficient answering the questions and understand what the performance assessment required of him, rubric-wise. Tiffany, Lisa, Nancy, and David all named the edTPA lesson planning and the video of their teaching as tools contributing to new insights either about their teaching or about their students. Lisa and Nancy reflected that they learned more about their students through deep analysis of their students' work. Lisa and Tiffany reported that the edTPA writing commentaries challenged their thinking as a teacher and forced them to stop and think about what didn't work in the lesson.

School placements varied as resources and constraints to learning. Four of the candidates, Lisa, Tiffany, Nancy, and Amelia, were able to use curriculum from their school placement as a beginning point for their work on the edTPA. Lisa's resources were supplemented with teacher-developed curriculum from the 2nd grade team at her school; the other three candidates had to modify and extend the existing curriculum to meet the needs of their specific students.

For Nancy and Tiffany, this was their first opportunity to plan a unit of instruction without aid from their Cooperating Teacher. Tiffany's coach said,

I think Paul [Tiffany's Cooperating Teacher] really allowed her to do what she needed to do with the curriculum during that time, so I think she was able to then incorporate some of her creative ideas with the curriculum. It seemed like, actually, a good time for her to figure out what it meant for Tiffany to be a teacher rather than being Paul's protégé at that point (Caitlin, Coach Interview).

Several teacher candidates reported concerns about constraints in their field placement classrooms regarding the edTPA. One candidate didn't feel he had a proper environment to implement his learning segment because the assessment tasks of the edTPA did not align with the norms in his Cooperating Teacher's classroom:

If it was up to me, and I had my management in place, and I had my processes, I had my routines, and I was keeping track of stuff, I'd probably do things differently. There are things that I do, but I kind of don't see the point of implementing certain assessments, and certain things right now (David, Interview #3).

On the other hand, one coach related that the mandatory nature of the edTPA actually enabled her candidates to experience planning a learning segment as a student teacher, given the power dynamics in a classroom.

Candidates seem to sometimes need assignments to be given in order to get access to things in the classroom. [The edTPA] gives them this opportunity to really build out a teaching segment. And the whole thinking about the whole scope and sequence and where things are going to go, how they're going to facilitate that, what they're going to know and learn from what the students can do to build on the next day (Helen, University Coach).

University coursework as a resource for the edTPA. There were two candidates who felt the Teacher Education Program prepared them well for the edTPA. Both Lisa and Nancy were assigned a math learning segment and they both described the ways their UW math methods course prepared them for the edTPA. Lisa said:

In our math methods programs we did a learning segment assignment which was really helpful in giving me an idea of what the planning process was going to look like for this. Also we looked at a lot of edTPA prompts so those were really helpful in making me think about doing my own lesson segment (Lisa, Interview #1).

Nancy concurred with, “I feel like that project that was segmented for us. We did [math] rehearsals in the fall quarter.” However, she goes on to say, “I did a lot of the planning for that [math methods] learning segment. I don’t feel like it’s a true legitimate rehearsal because it’s one of the 3 parts [of the edTPA]” (Nancy, Interview #1).

Amelia completed her edTPA in math, but she did not comment on her method coursework in any of our three interviews. She described other aspects of the program related to the edTPA, including information workshops:

These big group meetings don't really -- they can't help us in that way. And then, of course, we're being told different things because it's hard to really pinpoint, like, "No, my different groups need this or this." Each of us needs something different, which is hard on us (Amelia, Interview #1).

David, with a Literacy edTPA, felt his coursework didn’t prepare him adequately. His situation was compounded by teaching poetry, which is a unit his Cooperating Teacher didn’t want to lead. David described his reaction at being asked to teach the poetry unit: “Just last week, he tells me he wants me to do poetry because there are questions on the MSP [Measuring Student Progress] about it. It’s kind of annoying but it makes sense” (Interview #1).

Overall university support. David compares the support he received from UW to his experiences with the Puget Sound Foundation (a pseudonym), a local philanthropic foundation aimed at supporting teacher candidates of color. David said, “It feels like anything we can ask TAs and coaches are really limited because there's only so much that you can do. I'm fortunate to have the Puget Sound Foundation” (David, Interview #1). David shared that the foundation

provided a seminar on the edTPA for the Puget Sound fellows. The fellows had a chance to talk to and hear from other Puget Sound fellows who had just completed their edTPA. David commented, “It's really fresh in their brain about the stuff that they wish they would've known and the stuff they're really proud of. That was super helpful to hear and see from someone who just did it” (David, Interview #1).

Amelia’s critique of edTPA process also centered on institutional factors: she thought the edTPA workshops provided by the UW program were too broad and unhelpful in answering her individual questions. She expressed dissatisfaction at having to complete an edTPA when she felt it was not “developmentally appropriate” for Kindergartners. She complained she had no choice but to teach learning centers, “We started doing centers maybe in February and it's not a good fit for this group, in my opinion. I had no choice. I just had to work with that and with the edTPA it's really hard to teach content for 15 minutes (Interview #3).

Finally, Amelia worried about not being able to complete her learning segment before spring break and the standardized testing phase in her classroom. All of these contextual factors added to Amelia’s stress about passing the edTPA in order to obtain certification.

Using Rogoff’s three planes of analysis as a lens to viewing the candidates’ approach to the edTPA allowed me to see the similarities and differences between the candidates and the resulting outcomes of their edTPA experience. Beyond individual case studies, the focus group and survey data presented in the following chapter provided opportunities to contrast the themes from the individual candidates with the rest of their cohort.

Chapter 6

Findings: Focus Group & Survey

I held two focus groups and administered one survey to the elementary teacher candidates from the 2013-14 cohort. These measures were included in this study to help me examine the relationships between the findings for my intensive case studies, and the experiences reported by the larger cohort of ELTEP students.

Focus Groups

I held two focus groups in order to capture the experiences of students-of-color (SOC) and those of Caucasian candidates separately. Woolf, McManus, Potts, & Dacre (2013) have documented test score gaps on written exams across ethnicities. The edTPA is also a standardized assessment, which historically, puts students of color at a disadvantage (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003). Given the intensive writing demands of the edTPA, it is possible there are differences in the experiences of students of color and Caucasian students.

The participants of the individual case studies were not included in either focus group. A particular focus of these group interviews was to gather information on candidates' approach to collaboration on the edTPA. While I held two separate focus groups to distinguish similarities and differences in the collaborative process of teacher candidates during their edTPA experience, differential analysis contrasting the two groups did not reveal much marked differences. Both focus groups were held after candidates had completed and submitted their performance assessment. In all, I had three students in the first focus group and four students in the second focus group. Both groups were asked to recall any collaboration during the edTPA experience, including both in and outside of their school placement and at the university during the

mandatory “writing days.” The collaborative opportunities within the edTPA proved to be beneficial to the candidates’ learning.

Collaborative Work Provided a New Perspective for Teacher Candidates

The collaboration was described as beneficial among candidates, even those teaching at different grade levels. One described her collaboration partner as, “We’re totally opposite. She’s in kindergarten. I’m third” (Focus Group #1). Despite this, she found the partnership to be helpful to her edTPA experience:

Collaboration gives you a perspective that you’re not really aware of fully. Janey will look at my video or my work and say, “Oh, this is this. This is what I think about it. You can add this to your edTPA writing.” Those kinds of aspects really make you think about how you’re teaching (Focus Group #1).

Other candidates chimed in with:

I think it’s good to bring those things to the surface because just in case you were wrong or if I was missing something, then I would be able to catch it. That’s the main thing about collaboration. It makes you think about aspects of your teaching that you don’t really see that someone else might see (Focus Group #1).

Collaboration takes more time. You have to bring another component of thinking. It’s a different kind of thinking, thinking to yourself and then thinking to someone else. I think there are huge benefits in collaboration (Focus Group #1).

During the second focus group, three of the four candidates shared that they collaborated on the edTPA but none of them experienced that level of collaboration at their school site. One candidate said, “I don’t think I could have done it [edTPA] without collaboration. I probably would have gotten all “1’s” on it [edTPA].” She revealed that, “There’s not a huge amount of collaboration between our classrooms in the grade level,” but “I want that [the collaboration] to be the case when I have my own classroom” (Focus Group #2). Another summed it up by saying,

I already have been learning this year that the power of collaboration has just been so helpful. With a group of supportive colleagues, it's just been really great to bounce ideas off each other, make sure we're on the right track of things and just validating that we're doing the right thing (Focus Group #1).

The data on collaboration from both focus groups fell into two main categories: seeking emotional support and generating lesson ideas.

Leveraging Peers for Emotional Support

Similar to the findings from the individual case studies, the participants from both focus groups stated that they sought emotional support and reassurance from their peers to get through the edTPA experience. One candidate said, "Just knowing other people are going through the process was kind of nice" (Focus Group #1). Another candidate said that during the writing process, she used her peers as an alignment check: "It was a check in, 'Where you at? What types of evidence are you providing for this? How much?' ... [I asked] logistical questions" (Focus Group #1).

For one woman, it was helpful to get together with a group of people that were in the same grade level and content area because "it gave a little bit of comparison to see if we were on the right track (Focus Group #1). Another said, "I focus really well by myself, so just having the opportunity to be sure I have a clear understanding of what is expected and then take that information and go do it at home was nice for me" (Focus Group #1). With the second focus group, I posed the idea of seeking and receiving emotional support from their colleagues, and one woman replied, "Totally, absolutely. We cried together and read together" (Focus Group #2).

The Concept of “Bouncing Ideas”

A phrase that frequently came up in both the case study data and the focus group data is the notion of “bouncing ideas” off each other. This is described as a gathering of two or more teacher candidates to discuss and generate lesson plan ideas. During these collaborative sessions, the “bouncing of ideas” included dissecting writing prompts, trading written commentaries (or reading them aloud) for feedback, and to a lesser extent, viewing each other’s videos through the lens of edTPA rubrics. I discuss each form of collaboration in the following section.

Generating lesson plan ideas. Collaboration during the lesson planning phase included generating ideas for activities that will engage students. Candidates from both focus groups reported extensive teamwork; one candidate said:

I actually collaborated with a lot of other TCs [Teacher Candidates]. We would just meet at a coffee shop or the library or someplace. If we had any questions, we would just brainstorm what we were doing or what might have been helpful or something like that (Focus Group #1).

A candidate from the second focus group said, “I did a lot of collaboration prior to the writing days. I had one person that I worked with the whole entire time beforehand and we did a lot of like bouncing things off each other.” Another said:

I did a lot of collaboration with someone who is at my school site in the same grade level and we spent a day ... like a whole day planning together, like each doing our own planning. We bounced ideas off each other and that was really helpful (Focus Group #2).

A third candidate in that focus group agreed that “most collaboration happened with the planning prompt and the actual planning” (Focus Group #2).

Making meaning from the edTPA writing prompts. A significant portion of collaboration during the writing days was spent making sense of the prompts. One candidate said:

I would say it was a lot more about clarification. The wording was really difficult for all of us. I guess really seeing what the question was asking and what we should be looking for or including in our response. The collaboration part was more about clarification (Focus Group #1).

The candidates described how they discerned understanding from the prompts:

We basically bounced the prompt off of each other. “This is what I think the prompt is trying to ask me. Is that what you think? This is my response. What do you think? I can add or take away?” That’s usually back and forth, back and forth (Focus Group #1).

Another said, “Those prompts are so hard and you have to dissect it up. That process of doing it together is really helpful” (Focus Group #1). Another candidate concurred with, “We just talked about, just read the questions [writing prompts] and the definitions and read little tidbits of what each other wrote to one another (Focus Group #1). One teacher candidate said:

Granted we didn’t copy from anybody, but just “What does this mean? I think it means this.” If any of the sections were ambiguous in any sense, we could shoot ideas off of each other and that was super, super helpful. Outside of the university writing days, I would get together with people and write and it was like, “How long is yours? Is mine too short?” (Focus Group #2).

Collaborative decision making for the videos of teaching. While the students of color focus group said they didn’t go as far as to view each other’s videos because “the videos were so different,” the candidates from the other focus group did. One candidate described the following joint effort:

The group that I was in, we all looked at each other’s videos and we actually helped each other pick out our segments. We looked at each other’s video and then helped edit and cut and then we each look at each other’s edited clips and wrote down questions pertaining to the prompts. “This is how I see [it].” Just to get outsider’s viewpoint

because she saw so many things I didn't see and vice versa, so that was super helpful (Focus Group #2).

Jointly interpreting student work samples. When asked for specific examples of their collaboration process, one candidate said:

Not the video clips but the student work, yes. We would give an oral analysis. We would say, "Well, this is what this student did and this is what I'm focusing on and this is what I'm analyzing. What do you think about this?" It really helped to articulate just what was going through our heads- just organizing all those thoughts (Focus Group #1).

Another agreed, "I would say student writing and more of it was just orally talking about it rather than looking and seeing commentaries because everyone had a different way of writing their commentary" (Focus Group #1).

Survey on Learning Opportunities in the edTPA

The online quantitative survey was administered to the entire 2013-14 elementary cohort after submission of their edTPA. The survey asked candidates to rank their level of agreement with statements relating to learning from the edTPA. Out of a cohort of 57 candidates, 44 completed the survey, for return rate of 77%.

For seven of the eight statements, a majority (over 50%) of the teacher candidates "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statements. Fifty-nine percent of the candidates who completed the survey "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement "I learned from doing the edTPA because of my collaboration with other Teacher Candidates." Fifty percent concurred that "I learned from the edTPA by designing my lesson plans with the rubrics in mind." Sixty-one percent of the candidates indicated "I learned from doing the edTPA because I spent so much time thinking about my teaching." Fifty percent recognized "I was able to learn more about the effectiveness of my teaching than I had in previous (non-edTPA) lessons." Sixty-five percent agreed "I had new insights about my teaching after watching my edTPA videos." Sixty-

three percent acknowledged that “On my edTPA, I was able to analyze my teaching more deeply than I had previously done.” Sixty-five percent conceded that “During the edTPA process, I planned more deeply than I have previously.” Only 22% of the candidates “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with “Due to the edTPA process, I got to know my students better than I did before.”

The survey results are displayed in Figure 3 below.

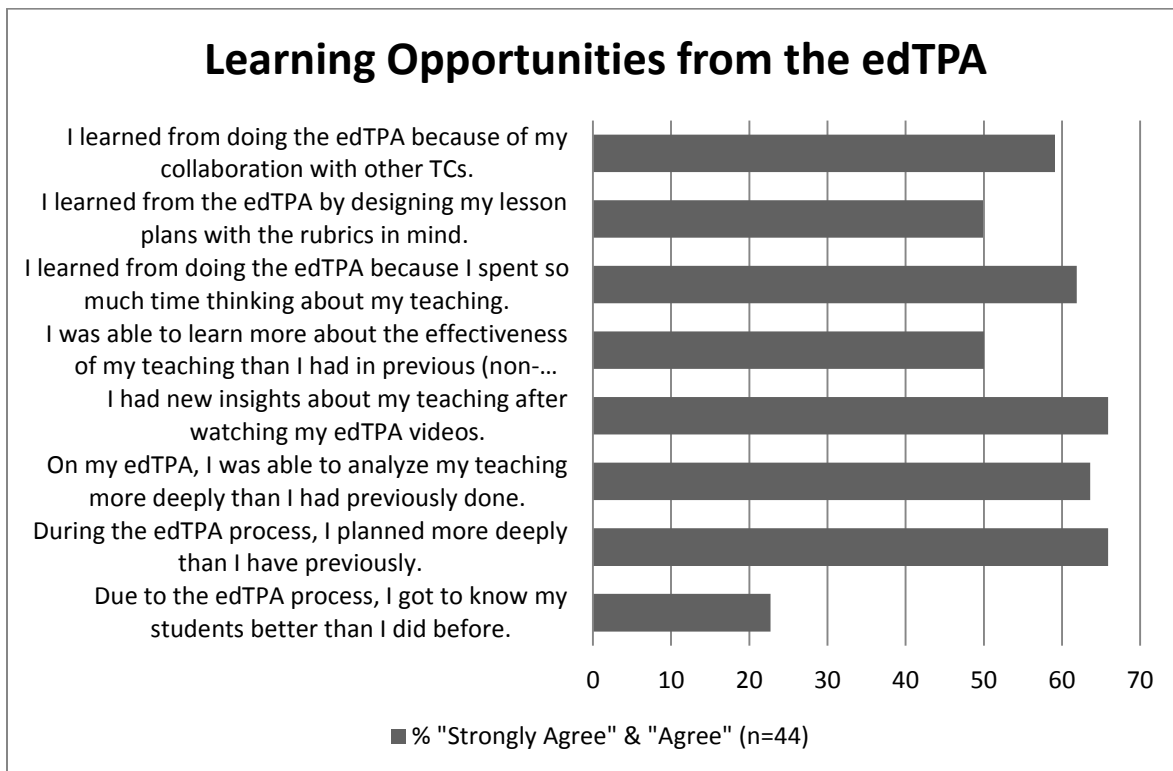


Figure 3. Learning Opportunities from the edTPA

The data from the focus group and the cohort survey identified multiple opportunities to learn from the edTPA. In particular, the multiple data sources indicated that collectively planning, unpacking rubric expectations, and analyzing lesson videos were beneficial to their learning.

Chapter 7

Discussion

This study examined affordances and constraints to learning for teacher candidates as they completed their edTPA; in particular, the research questions asked what and how teacher candidates can learn from the edTPA and investigated the contextual factors that may aid or hamper learning. The study included five intensive case studies, two focus groups, and a survey of the cohort. Previous chapters presented individual case study findings, a cross case analysis of the participants, and findings from the focus groups and survey data. This chapter summarizes the findings, discusses the significance of these results, and provides suggestions for future research.

In the following sections, I integrate the case study, focus group, and survey findings addressing each of my research questions.

Research Question 1: What opportunities to learn exist for teacher candidates from the edTPA process?

My findings indicated that opportunities to learn do exist for elementary teacher candidates in the University of Washington's elementary teacher education program undergoing the edTPA. Notably, there were components of the edTPA that were consistently associated with candidate learning: the in-depth lesson planning from Task 1, the use of video recording in Task 2, assessing student learning in Task 3, and lastly, the written commentaries that were required in all three tasks.

The edTPA required each candidate to submit a lesson plan for each lesson in their learning segment. The detailed and explicit lesson plan requirements were a learning opportunity for the teacher candidates. For many candidates, the edTPA was the first

opportunity for them to plan *and* implement a unit of instruction in one content area. While the candidates experienced planning units of instruction in their coursework, they typically did not have the opportunity to implement a learning segment in their placement setting until the edTPA experience. The survey results from the cohort indicated that 65% of those who responded thought the edTPA was an opportunity to plan more deeply than they had previously.

The edTPA required candidates to submit a video clip from any lesson within their learning segment that showcases teacher and students engaged in learning. The videos allowed the candidates to review and reflect on their teaching practice. The video component provided a mirror of their teaching to aid them in further reflecting and evaluating their practice.

Case study findings suggested that the edTPA facilitated the candidates' analysis of their own teaching effectiveness by requiring them to look at both individual student work and patterns across the entire class. The benefits in having concrete student data were evident to the candidates. The data helped them to make immediate changes to their teaching and provided them with a clearer understanding of each individual student's mastery level.

The focus group findings indicated the collaborative work on selecting video clips, analyzing student work, and generating lesson plan ideas supported their completion of the edTPA but the data did not allow me to draw conclusions about what they learned from this collaboration. The survey data indicated that 50% of the respondents agreed designing lesson plans with the edTPA rubrics in mind were an opportunity to learn. Half of the candidates agreed that they learned more about the effectiveness of their teaching from the edTPA process.

In all three tasks of the edTPA (Planning, Instruction, and Assessing), candidates were required to produce a commentary responding to prompts within each task. These written commentaries provided the opportunity for reflection and analysis by the candidates. The writing

prompts required the candidate to stop and think about what did and did not work in their lessons.

Research Question 2: To what extent do teacher candidates take up opportunities to learn during the edTPA experience?

There was variation in how candidates responded to the opportunities to learn within the edTPA. From the case study data, the differences in how each candidate negotiated the edTPA were associated with the personal motivations of each candidate. Figure 2 (p. 92) illustrates the continuum of how each candidate viewed the edTPA, ranging from its purpose as a certification requirement to its function as an opportunity to improve practice. The particular stance of each candidate also intersected with the extent they attended to their own needs or their students' needs in planning their edTPA unit.

These differences in candidate motivation were associated with the extent candidates took up opportunities to learn. The candidates who viewed the edTPA as both an assessment *and* as an opportunity for learning were more likely to take up learning opportunities within the edTPA compared to those candidates who viewed the edTPA only as a certification requirement. Four out of five case study participants commented on the extensive planning required of the edTPA, and they took up this opportunity to engage their students and think deeply about student needs. The focus group candidates reported collaborative efforts during the lesson planning phase. Part of these efforts generated ideas for activities which would engage students.

Evidence from the case studies suggested that candidates took up opportunities to learn in the context of viewing and analyzing the video records of their teaching. Four out of five candidates consciously changed their practice in subsequent lessons within their edTPA unit.

The case study participants described leveraging the benefits of the video. Lisa reported changing her instruction within her edTPA learning segment to ask higher-level questions. Tiffany noted the need to talk less and allow more student conversation. David realized he could improve material handling for more efficient use of class time. Some of the focus group participants reported viewing each other's videos and helping their peers choose and edit clips. This helped to provide an "outsider's viewpoint." Conversely, some participants in the second focus groups did not consider viewing video a good use of their collaboration time because their "contexts are so different." Over 60% of the survey respondents agreed that watching their edTPA videos helped them gain new insights about their teaching.

There was variation in the extent candidates took up "analyzing student work" as a learning opportunity. From the case study data, Lisa and Nancy stated it was helpful to have one-on-one discussions with their focus students because it provided data they otherwise would not have with written student work. Consistent with her general stance on the edTPA experience, Amelia reported that her analysis of her students' work did not reveal any additional insights about their learning or about her practice. Focus group participants reported that looking at student work collectively was a helpful analytic tool for organizing their thoughts. One candidate said that orally describing student work to her colleagues "really helped to articulate what was going through my head." Fifty percent of the survey respondents agreed analytical work on the edTPA helped them to learn more about the effectiveness of their teaching. However, only 22% agreed that "the edTPA process helped me to get to know my students better than I did before."

The use of the written commentary as an opportunity to learn varied among candidates. For at least two of the case study candidates, the process of producing written commentaries

supported them in shifting the attention of their reflections from their own practice and onto the needs of their students. Lisa thought the reflection and writing process was beneficial; the assessment commentary, in particular, helped her to analyze her data from the students. Tiffany reported that the written commentaries prompted her to look for instances of student thinking and problem solving. Conversely, David and Amelia described the edTPA writing prompts as repetitive and not closely aligned to their teaching. The focus group participants reported that dissection of the edTPA prompts was a significant portion of their collaborative work. Their discussions centered around interpreting the prompts, providing sample responses, and providing feedback on each other's responses. The survey did not ask about the written commentaries.

Research Question 3: What contextual conditions (e.g. collaboration with peers and/or program faculty), prior learning, and other background attributes are associated with variations in what and how teacher candidates learn from the edTPA process?

Several contextual conditions were associated with the variations in how candidates learned from the edTPA experience. First, the history of the candidates appeared to affect how each one viewed and approached the edTPA. Lisa comes from a family of educators, and she viewed the edTPA as an opportunity to improve as a math teacher. Nancy, a mother and self-proclaimed lifelong learner, also viewed the edTPA as a learning opportunity. Amelia viewed the edTPA primarily as a requirement for certification. David's personal stance meant that he viewed the edTPA as not culturally responsive.

In addition to personal history, the candidates' relationships with their peers and support system affected how much collaboration they sought out during the edTPA process. Each candidate has worked with the same mentor teacher and university coach throughout the academic year and this professional relationship very likely affected the extent of their

collaborative opportunities on the edTPA. David and Nancy consider themselves social learners and sought out peer collaboration. David, in particular, leveraged support from his contacts as a fellow with the Puget Sound Foundation. Amelia, on the other hand, quietly accepted her Cooperating Teacher's classroom norms and did not attempt to negotiate any changes.

The institutional conditions both at the university and at each school placement site also appeared to affect how much candidates learned from the edTPA. At the university level, the candidates varied in their perceptions of connections between the requirements of the edTPA and the experiences they had in coursework. Some candidates also described a lack of clarity on what types of supports were allowed in preparing the edTPA portfolio. This have may inhibited some candidates in taking up opportunities for constructive collaboration with Cooperating Teachers and Coaches. At the school sites, the specific context of each candidate's classroom and relationship with his/her respective Cooperating Teacher also appeared to affect learning opportunities. David, for example, described the situation where a poetry unit was "dumped" on him because his mentor teacher did not want to teach it. Conversely, Nancy's mentor's teacher is National Board certified, and she likely understood the underlying principles of the edTPA beyond that of a standardized assessment.

Candidate Learning from the edTPA:

Interactions between Personal, Interpersonal, and Institutional Planes

In the following section, I summarize case study findings in the context of each of Rogoff's three planes (personal, interpersonal, and institutional) with specific focus on the ways these factors interact with one another in ways that affect candidate learning. I use the following figure to illustrate how Rogoff's three planes are interrelated and can mutually influence candidate learning.

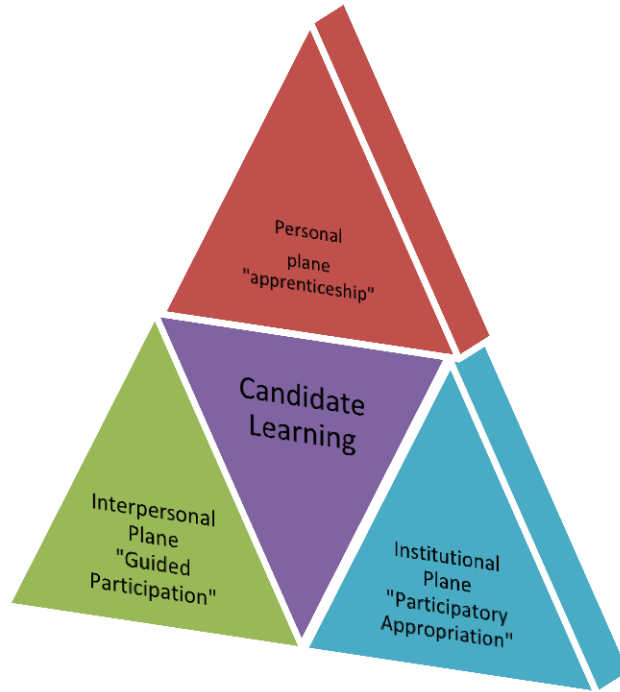


Figure 4. Rogoff’s Sociocultural Theory of Development on Three Planes

The variations in the learning experiences within the edTPA process for each teacher candidate may be interpreted in terms of interactions between variables that operate at each “plane” of the Rogoff framework. The differences in learning are related to a combination of factors. In Figure 5 below, I present some of Nancy’s learning outcomes from the edTPA experience in the center and in the surrounding triangles, some of the influencing factors from each of the three planes (personal, interpersonal, and institutional). From the edTPA experience, Nancy learned the value of differentiating for individual students and choosing depth over breadth when teaching. On the personal plane, the factor that appeared to influence these learning outcomes was Nancy’s motivation to learn. Nancy viewed the edTPA as an opportunity *for learning*, for herself and for her students. She strategically chose her edTPA lesson topic based on what she thought was important for her students’ learning

On the interpersonal plane, Nancy’s interactions with her National Board certified mentor teacher appeared to support her learning. Her Cooperating Teacher is knowledgeable about the performance assessment process and was likely able to help Nancy make meaningful connections between the edTPA and her teaching. Nancy had a relationship with her Cooperating Teacher in which she was comfortable asking for release from teaching other content areas during the week of her edTPA. She planned lessons with her peers and provided emotional support to her colleagues at her school placement site.

On the institutional plane, Nancy accessed the resources that were provided, such as the edTPA workshops at the university. Since Nancy was concerned about learning in addition to passing the assessment, she found the workshops useful in helping her make connections between the edTPA and her coursework.

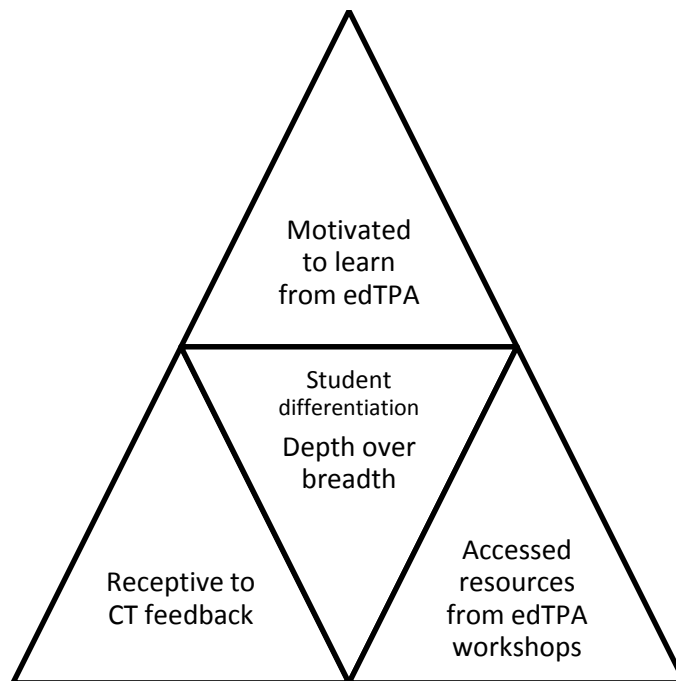


Figure 5. The Factors that Influenced Nancy’s Learning Outcomes

In contrast, Amelia viewed the edTPA primarily as a “performance” to be exchanged for a credential and her interpretations may have interfered with her ability to recognize and take up opportunities to learn (Figure 6). On the personal plane, Amelia felt pressured to pass the edTPA in order to obtain her credential. Her approach to the edTPA reflected her sole motivation to pass; she did not look for learning opportunities within this experience.

Amelia’s view of the edTPA as a burdensome task may have also obstructed her motivation to seek collaboration. She did not report seeking support from her mentor teacher or from her colleagues at and beyond her school placement. In fact, Amelia was afraid to modify her teacher’s classroom set-up during her edTPA unit. Amelia’s coach only reported that she helped with questions of a logistical nature, such as working out the best timeline for the edTPA.

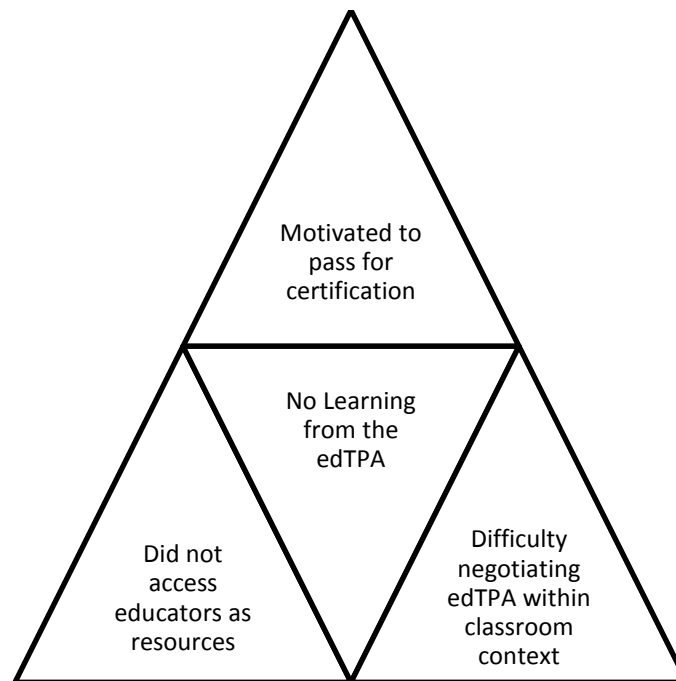


Figure 6. The Factors that Influenced Amelia’s Learning Outcomes

On the institutional plane, Amelia appeared to have difficulty negotiating the demands of the edTPA within the context of her classroom in part because she externalized responsibility for

her teaching decisions. She divulged that while she did not think small group learning centers was the best instructional method for her particular class of students, she felt she “had to teach in centers” because that was how her Cooperating Teacher set up the classroom. She followed the status quo of her Cooperating Teacher’s classroom and “blamed” the edTPA when the two did not align. Amelia and Nancy represent two contrasting cases where the interactions of variables within the three planes affected variations in learning opportunities.

Social Construction of (In)authenticity

The data from this study suggest that the opportunities and constraints to candidate learning are both self-created and influenced by interpersonal and intuitional contexts. The edTPA itself also mediates the learning process in many ways. The extent to which individual candidates take up opportunities to learn from the edTPA are affected by their interpretations of the meaning of the assessment—what they often termed its “authenticity.” While the edTPA was designed by educators to be a “real” teaching event, the policies and practices surrounding its implementation by the institution may also affect how the candidates interpret the “authenticity” of the edTPA experience.

Lisa and Nancy experienced the edTPA as a relatively “authentic” assessment in part because of the way they approached it as an opportunity to learn. But this approach was also reinforced by the support they received from the cooperating teachers in negotiating the requirements within the context of their classrooms. They both attended to edTPA rubrics but also paid attention to the specific needs of their students. Their successfully negotiation of these variables allowed for the opportunities to learn to work for them, and for their students.

In contrast, the data from other cases suggest that the combination of personal disposition, classroom context, and specific institutional practices may have led candidates to view the edTPA as an “inauthentic” assessment and to discard (or fail to recognize) its potential value as an opportunity for learning. David and Amelia are two participants where their personal values and ideologies clashed with their perceptions of the edTPA as a cultural practice. David viewed the edTPA as not culturally responsive and was quite vocal in protesting the assessment as “inauthentic.” His views regarding the value of the edTPA appeared to be indirectly validated by his Cooperating Teacher, Greg, who was relatively disengaged with the process. Greg used the occasion of the edTPA to suggest that David teach a curriculum unit in which he (Greg) had little interest or commitment.

Amelia was skeptical about standardized tests in general, and their appropriateness for young children in particular-- and thus viewed the edTPA negatively. However, she knew she had to demonstrate she can meet the edTPA requirements in order to become a certified teacher so she approached the edTPA tasks by catering to it, providing the responses she thought would benefit her score. For example, Amelia created visual guides and provided exit cards for her students, which she explained was a way of catering to the edTPA rather than for the value it would provide her students. There was no indication from the data that either her mentor teacher or coach framed the edTPA as a learning opportunity. Amelia’s coach Erin thought Amelia was “ready to go and was not going to have any difficulties whatsoever with the edTPA” (Coach Interview). Erin recalled providing logistical support for Amelia, such as helping her think through the ideal schedule for the edTPA experience. Erin likely unintentionally framed the edTPA assessment as a hoop to jump through for certification purposes.

Amelia's perception of the way the university structured and mediated the edTPA experience was that it was not framed as a learning opportunity. Amelia described the edTPA workshops provided by the teacher education programs as "big group meetings that don't really help us" (Interview #1). She expanded on this with, "My student groups are different [from those of other candidates]. We're being told different things" (Interview #1). There were no self-reported changes in her practice after the edTPA experience.

Significance of the Results

The results of this study indicated that the edTPA does indeed afford significant learning opportunities for preservice teachers. The personal motivation of each teacher candidate appeared to affect how they approached the edTPA as a learning opportunity in addition to its function as a gateway assessment. In addition, both the interpersonal and institutional contexts for each candidate also afforded opportunities as well as constraints to learning. Taken together, these data suggest there may be a variety of actions that teacher education programs can take to increase the likelihood that the edTPA functions as an opportunity for candidate learning.

Suggestions for Improving Candidate Learning from the edTPA

The teacher candidates in this study experienced a range of opportunities to learn. The extent to which they took up these opportunities was mediated by various sociocultural factors such as individual candidate disposition, school practicum placement, and institutional policies and practices both at the University of Washington and in their field placement schools. In Figure 5, I take the previous figure on Rogoff's sociocultural theory of development on three planes and interpret it in terms of implications for program change.

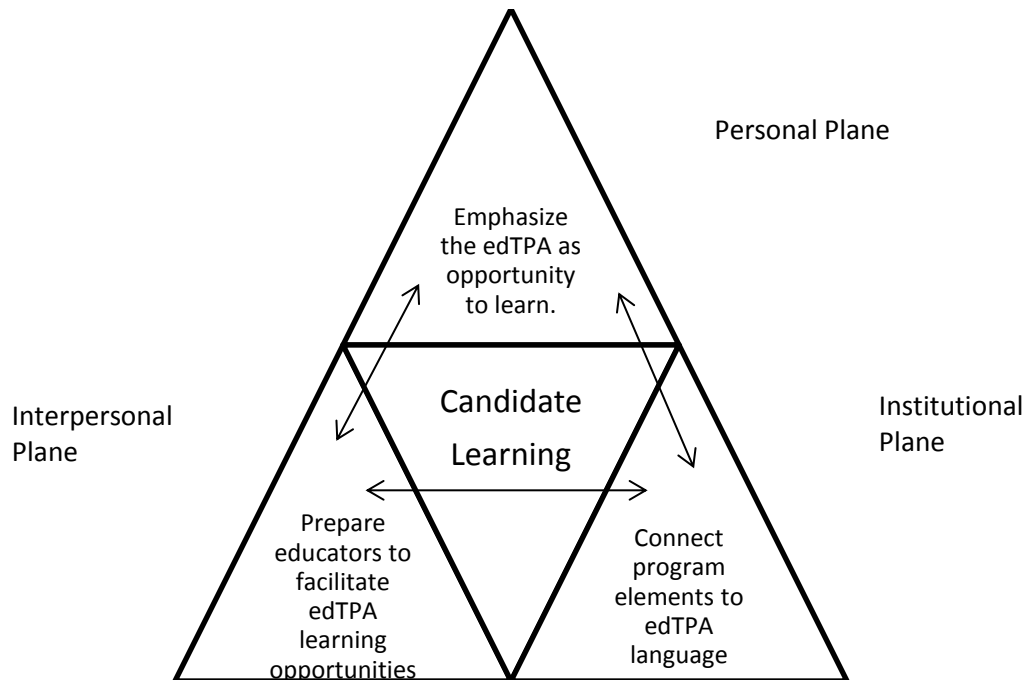


Figure 7. Implications for Program Change applied to Rogoff’s Three Planes of Development
 In the following sections, I discuss some of the difficulties the candidates described as they produced their edTPA and how teacher education programs might better support their candidates in taking up opportunities to learn from their edTPA work.

Personal plane: Explicitly emphasize the value of the edTPA as an opportunity to learn. On the personal plane, candidates such as Amelia can be better guided by the support system of Cooperating Teachers and Coaches to look at the edTPA experience as an opportunity to learn. A common theme was that the candidates’ educators treated the edTPA as a necessary but not educational requirement for their credential. David’s Cooperating Teacher described the edTPA as a “small snapshot in time” (Greg, Cooperating Teacher). Greg added, “Having gone through National Board [certification], I do wonder if it gives as broad of a picture of someone’s accomplishments as opposed to a portfolio (Cooperating Teacher).

Support was rarely offered beyond the prediction that “you’ll be fine.” In speaking with both Cooperating Teachers and Coaches, these educators waited for their candidates to approach

them with specific questions or requests for support. With Amelia, it is not in her disposition to take the initiative to seek out additional collaborative opportunities beyond what is offered. Amelia did not indicate whether her school placement peers approached her for collaboration. Amelia quite passively accepted the curriculum and instructional methods of her placement and externalized responsibility for these teaching decisions by stating in our interviews: “I have to teach in centers, I have to use that curriculum.” Amelia’s Coach Erin was unaware of Amelia’s feelings about small group center learning and informed me she had no concerns as she felt Amelia was well prepared for the edTPA.

Interpersonal plane: Prepare teacher educators to facilitate learning opportunities during the edTPA process. Within the interpersonal plane, some of the implications for program change include orienting Cooperating Teachers so that they better understand the edTPA assessment. While some Cooperating Teachers in this study saw direct overlap between the edTPA and the National Board Certification, some of the mentor teachers also viewed this assessment as a distraction in the path of their candidate’s learning. Rita, Nancy’s National Board certified Cooperating Teacher, felt the edTPA process held Nancy back “from being where we want her to be, to be ready for full-time teaching” (Cooperating Teacher). Tiffany’s Cooperating Teacher Paul described the edTPA process as “disruptive for her momentum, and I think for classroom” (Cooperating Teacher).

One way to orient the cooperating teachers towards understanding the edTPA is to recruit them as local scorers for the edTPA. This recruitment should occur earlier than spring quarter, which is when the edTPA is implemented. Ideally, the components of the edTPA will be made transparent so that mentor teachers recognize the alignment between their practice and that of the

edTPA. For example, the teacher education program can provide documentation of the overlap between the edTPA and the tools used for teacher evaluation in the partner school districts.

Overall, there needs to be clearer connections between the Danielson framework, the Marzano Model, the edTPA, Pro-Teach, and the National Board certification. The Danielson and Marzano frameworks are used as teacher evaluation models in public school districts while Pro-Teach and National Board certification are professional versions of the edTPA. The observation protocol used in UW's teacher education program incorporates the Danielson Framework and the Marzano Model as well as the entirety of the edTPA rubrics. However, only one participant in my study saw direct overlap between the edTPA and the observation protocol. This revelation only came about when she had a formal observation with her coach after she finished the edTPA.

Faculty can strengthen the connection between coursework and the edTPA requirements by introducing the rubric language in relation to their instructional activities and assignments. This will explicitly help candidates connect their prior knowledge to the edTPA. Besides Lisa, no other participant in this study connected the rubrics from the formal observations in their placement to the rubrics of the edTPA. Among the focus group findings, a prominent theme was that much collaborative time was spent dissecting and interpreting prompts and rubrics. If teacher educators can explicate the alignment between their practices and the requirements of the edTPA rubrics (both within and across courses), this may better enable candidates to experience the requirements of both their courses and the assessment as more "authentic."

Institutional plane: Connect program elements to edTPA language. One common perception among the candidates was that they were not adequately prepared for the edTPA assessment. Institutionally, this indicates that there is a need for more common language and

transparency. There is evidently a disconnection between what teacher educators present versus what the teacher candidates take up and internalize. Despite successfully passing multiple formal observations with their coaches, none of the participants in my study connected those observation rubrics with the edTPA rubrics while they were producing the edTPA. This difficulty may stem from the candidate's status as novice teachers. When they are taught assessment or differentiation in one setting (within a course), it appears some candidates struggle to apply it effectively in a performance task such as the edTPA. The main concepts of difficulty broached by the candidates in this particular study are: Academic Language, Assessments, and (to a lesser extent), Student Voice. The teacher education program may be more intentional in connecting program work with the language of the edTPA.

Extending the Existing Literature

As in previous studies on teacher candidates learning from the edTPA (Lin, 2012; Liu & Milman, 2013; Margolis & Doring, 2013), this study found that the edTPA provides concrete learning opportunities for preservice teachers. It extends the work in the existing literature by documenting teacher candidate experiences of the edTPA process rather than relying solely on ex post facto teacher candidate reports. In addition, the present study contributes to the extant body of knowledge by identifying discrete components of the edTPA that provided opportunities to learn, as well as aspects of the edTPA that may interfere with candidates taking up opportunities to learn from the edTPA. Furthermore, a discussion is provided on the extent to which these learning opportunities are mediated by the interpersonal and institutional factors that might aid or constrain this development.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, teacher candidate learning is affected by many factors, including prior history and experiences, disposition, and program experience. Many aspects of this history are beyond the scope of the study as designed. Most fundamentally, the naturalistic, rather than experimental, design of the study limits the kinds of assertions about causality that can be reasonably made from these data. Secondly, participation in this study was voluntary, so it is possible that the seven case study participants may not be representative of the larger population of the candidate cohort. Finally, the small sample size, as well as the fact that it was carried out within a single program, significantly limits generalizations to be drawn on the basis of these data.

Future Research

This study relied on teacher candidate interviews, with some triangulation through observations, other teacher educator interviews, focus groups, and survey data. The findings indicated that specific components (lesson planning, video, analyzing student work) of the edTPA foster new learning. Each of these findings merits replication through additional study, including documentation of preservice teacher learning within these specific components more closely. These directions for future research can include intervention studies and action research. Intervention-oriented research studies can be specifically tailored to evaluate direct impacts of institutional edTPA workshops or the work of teacher educators to explicate the alignment between their practices and the requirements of the edTPA rubrics. Action research may be a particularly useful way for professionals to bring about development in his or her practice by analyzing existing practice and identifying elements for change (Zeichner, 2003). Future studies

may investigate teacher candidate learning in these areas by taking a closer look at what they produce before the edTPA experience and what they produce after the process.

The field of teacher education presently uses the edTPA as a gateway assessment, but the present study suggests it can *also* be used as a valuable learning process. The value of the edTPA used in this way appears more likely to contribute to the professionalization of teaching by demonstrating how close study of one's own practice, even in the context of a state-mandated performance assessment, may be used for the purposes of continual improvement. Such a stance lies close to heart of what we mean by "professionalism."

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Appendix A
Interview Protocol #1 with Teacher Candidates

Interview Protocol 1: edTPA Learning study

(Anticipated Timing: March) Exploratory, semi-structured

Topic: Teacher candidate learning and/or other experiences from going through the “process” of a summative performance assessment such as the Education Performance Assessment (edTPA)

Informants: teacher candidates in UW’s Elementary Teacher Education Program who will go through the “process” in spring 2014.

Preamble: Hi _____, I am a doctoral student at UW, and I am studying teacher candidate (TC) learning, more specifically, learning opportunities for Teacher Candidates as they go through the edTPA process. In thinking about this research study, I’m conducting an exploratory interview to get the lay of the land. I want to capture teacher candidate’s experience as they go through the edTPA as well capture their thought processes for the decisions they make within the edTPA. May I audio record our conversation?

1. Tell me about your educational background.
 - a. Do you consider yourself an English Language Learner? Why or why not?
2. How did you come into the teaching profession?
3. Thinking of your role as a teacher candidate who has to go through the edTPA in the spring, tell me what your experiences with the edTPA at this point. [Broader context and substance of their experience].
4. What do you perceive as the **purpose(s) of the edTPA**?
5. What **supports have you received from the Elementary Teacher Education Program (ELTEP)** thus far? [*Probe: From CT, faculty, coach, TA?*] Can you give me some recent examples of supports you have received? Who did what? How did it help (or not)?
6. How are you **preparing for the edTPA**? [*Probe: faculty, previous course assignments, etc.*]
7. Are there **factors about your school practicum placement** (or district) that play into your decision making?
8. What do you think are the **opportunities for learning** from going through the edTPA process? For example, in your own case, so far, has the edTPA prompted our learning in any way? If so, what ways?
9. Do you have any **concerns thus far the edTPA**? [*Probe: would you prefer alternative assessments such as multiple choice tests?*]
10. Is there anything else you want to add?

Appendix B
Interview Protocol #2 with Teacher Candidates

Interview Protocol 2: edTPA Learning study
(Anticipated Timing: May 1st after teaching, before submission)

1. Tell me where you are in the edTPA process.

Planning:

2. I know you planned for (3/4/5) lessons. What factors went into this decision?
3. I know you taught whole class and small group. How did you choose the students for your edTPA unit?
4. Tell me how you developed the lesson plans for the edTPA.
5. Tell me about the resources you used for your edTPA unit (either curriculum or CT).
 - (Where did you seek these resources for your edTPA unit?) [From lesson plans/curriculum, from fellow teacher candidates, program faculty or coaches)?

-
6. How did the lesson plans differ from a typical lesson?
 7. How did planning affect the instruction? (Tell me about classroom management).
 - Is this what you typically do or is it more rigorous?
 - How does this planning compare to _____(class, coach, or CT lesson plans).
 8. Did you learn anything new your students? What did you notice about your strengths and weakness as a teacher?

Instruction:

9. Now that you have taught your unit, what differences do you see between this unit and a previous lessons or units that you taught in your field placement?
 - In what ways are they different? (more rigorous, detailed?)
10. Have you had the opportunity to plan and teach units previous to the edTPA experience? (Subject?) How did that experience compare to the edTPA experience?
 - What stood out to you about your edTPA unit? (What were the important things you saw?)
 - You mentioned _____ (student assessment). What made you start using that strategy?
11. Is there anything else you want to add?

Appendix C
Interview Protocol #3 with Teacher Candidates

Interview Protocol 3: edTPA Learning study
(Anticipated Timing: May 20th post submission)

Prompted Think aloud, clinical

Interviewer: Now that you have finished the edTPA, I'll like to hear about your experiences with it.

I would like to invite you to look at your submitted edTPA and talk through your thinking with me.

Let's look at one of your edTPA lessons here....

1. We talked about your planning and instruction for the edTPA during our second interview. What are your thoughts about planning and instruction now? (Has anything changed?)
2. Talk me through your lesson plan and planning commentary
3. Tell me what about your thoughts were as you designed the lesson.
4. **Assessment:** What did you see when you looked at your 3 student samples? (how did that affect your view of student learning?)

How did that change your view of your own teaching?

- What led you to notice that _____?

5. **Analysis:** Tell me about your thought processes as you analyzed your lessons.

What did you learn from this analysis?

How did it differ from a typical lesson?

How has this experience [teaching the TPA unit] changed your instruction?

(Rubric 10) What changes would you make to your instruction to better support student learning of the central focus (e.g., missed opportunities)?

Why do you think these changes would improve student learning?

- What led you to the insight that _____?
- Tell me about the role of student voice....of academic language....?

6. Are there changes to your knowledge or actions as a result of the edTPA performance assessment?
7. Stepping back from this example, what take –aways or changes will you make to your instructional practice?
8. Is there anything else you want to add?

Appendix D
Interview Protocol with Cooperating Teacher

Cooperating Teacher Interview Protocol
(*Anticipated Timing: Post edTPA Submission-May 13th*)

Purpose: uncover data that may be outside the perceptions of TC, triangulate data with TC reports

Informants: mentor teachers of case study participants

Preamble: Hi, thank you for your time...

- 1) Tell me about your teacher candidate as a beginning teacher.
- 2) What do you see as the Cooperating Teacher's role in the edTPA process?
- 3) What type of resources did your Teacher Candidate seek from you?
- 4) What do you think the Teacher Candidate learned through this process?

.....

- 5) Is there anything else you want to tell me about your teacher candidate and the edTPA that I haven't asked you about?

Appendix E
Interview Protocol with Coach

Coach/Supervisor Interview Protocol
(*Anticipated Timing: Post edTPA Submission-May 13th*)

Purpose: uncover data that may be outside the perceptions of TC, triangulate data with TC reports

Informants: coaches of case study participants

Preamble: Hi, thank you for your time...

- 1) Tell me about your teacher candidate as a novice teacher
- 2) What are your thoughts about your TC's preparation level for the edTPA?
- 3) What do you see as the coach's role in the edTPA process?
- 4) What type of resources did your TC seek from you?
- 5) What do you think the Teacher Candidate learned through this process?

.....

- 6) Is there anything else you want to tell me about your teacher candidate and the edTPA that I haven't asked you about?

Appendix F
Field Notes/Observation Guide

Field notes (Observation of edTPA lessons)

Participant: _____

School/ Grade: _____

Date/Time: _____

Context: _____

Time	Notes	Observer comments

Appendix G
Focus Group Protocol with Teacher Candidates

Focus Group Protocol: edTPA Learning study
(Anticipated Timing: May 15th - post writing week)

Purpose: designed based on case study data

Informants: Teacher candidates

1. Tell me about your edTPA experiences (peers, CTs, faculty) before the UW writing week.
2. Tell me about the collaboration process during UW writing week? (What did you do?)
3. What did you do specifically (trade papers; look at other TC's student work/video clips)?
4. How has your collaboration experience change your knowledge or actions around teaching? (What do you plan to do differently or the same in the future?)
5. What do you see as the benefits or drawbacks of this collaboration experience?
6. One thing I've heard several people mention is _____; I wonder what the rest of you have to say about that?
7. I recalled that some of you mentioned _____ earlier; I wonder how things like _____ fit into that?

8. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your edTPA that I haven't asked you about?

Appendix H
Survey with Teacher Candidate

The following statements ask about your edTPA experience. Please rank your level of agreement with the following statements:

1. Due to the edTPA process, I got to know my students better than I did before.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2. During the edTPA process, I planned more deeply than I have previously.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3. On my edTPA, I was able to analyze my teaching more deeply than I had previously done.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. I had new insights about my teaching after watching my edTPA videos.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. I was able to learn more about the effectiveness of my teaching than I had in previous (non-edTPA) lessons.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. I learned from doing the edTPA because I spent so much time thinking about my teaching.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. I learned from the edTPA by designing my lesson plans with the rubrics in mind.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. I learned from doing the edTPA because of my collaboration with other TCs.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix I

Case Study of Emily

Emily is an Asian-American teacher candidate in her mid-20s who was a student of the 2013-2014 Elementary Teacher Education Program cohort. She attended school in the Seattle area and graduated from the University of Washington, Seattle with a minor in Education. She entered teaching because her parents had always “instilled great want for education for their kids.” In addition, she reported that “school was a safety for me, just because my Dad was still going through the genocide war in his head, and he made the home sometimes really scary for us.”

School proved a safe haven for Emily in other ways:

I just found a great community in school and I loved it. That's something that drove me in the profession as well... all my white female teachers who really cultivated a community for me.

In addition, Emily embodied the educator role at an early age:

I tutored at the White Center Boys and Girls Club when I was in high school. Even in 5th grade, I loved going to the Kindergarten classroom and just hanging out with the kids and reading to them. That was a great passion of mine even growing up (Emily, Interview #1).

English Language Learner status

Emily was born in the Philippines and her family moved to the United States a few months after her birth. She describes herself as not a “stereotypical English Language Learner:”

Growing up I spoke Cambodian and it's hard because I have that at home and I was trying to learn English at school. My parents wanted me to speak English to them at home so they could also learn the language. I don't consider myself a full, not the stereotypical English Language Learner but I feel like I'm still trying to learn English to this day. I'm trying to be better at it or not sound like a fool when I'm talking to people. I am concerned about writing; I want it to be clear and for people to understand it. (Emily, Interview #1).

She concluded with “I don't consider myself one [an ELL], but it's technically not my first language either.” As we spoke of the edTPA, Emily said:

You know it's hard I was talking to you about being an ELL person or not being an ELL person and even just unpacking the language of the edTPA is very, very hard. The prompts, the rubrics- they just don't align for some reason (Emily, Interview #1).

She describes her initial perception of the edTPA as:

This mysterious thing they were trying to not tell us or try to tell us and it was really conflicting messages that we were getting. I'm not trying to stress over it. I'm mostly just afraid I'm going to fail. There is fear in me as well because I don't want to fail.

Listening to the experiences of teacher candidates from other teacher education programs did nothing to allay her fears: “I'm hearing experiences from other MIT [Masters in Teaching] people, STEP [Secondary Teacher Education Program], on advice they have for us and it's something I just don't want to think about, but I know I just have to get it done.” Emily's cohort also turned towards each other for support:

I feel like there's a limit on the help we can get from UDub people, so that makes everything feel very much more intense just because you have these experts that can help you, but they're just there. You can't ask for any help. It's just this odd thing. I guess our peers trying to help one another, which is great (Emily, Interview #2).

Emily describes the purpose of the edTPA as “to assess us, it would be to see if we're going to be good teachers.” Other learning outcomes she predicts are “I'm going to learn how to answer the questions which seem really hard right now because they're just wordy. I feel like what I'm going to learn most from it is how to eventually do this for my National Boards.”

Emily listed the pros and cons to the edTPA:

It's a process of self-reflection and really understanding the craft and how you can get better. But it's very stressful for all of us. To have this fail or pass kind of thing; we're in the profession, we're not trying to tell our students, it's this fail or pass thing, well, why are you telling me of this fail or pass kind of thing?

There's stress to just freaking unpack it because if you don't know what the question is, you're definitely going to get it wrong (Emily, Interview #1).

Emily was assigned to complete the edTPA in Literacy. She described the program support as follows:

In Math Methods class they tried to scaffold answering the edTPA questions for us. We practiced it on our own; imagining three segments that we want to do. It's not that great for people who don't have math for the EdTPA. For Literacy I haven't gotten any support- I don't think- for that (Emily, Interview #1).

Teaching Practicum Setting

Emily elaborated on some of the constraints in her setting: "Kindergarten is just really different. We do have to create a lot of our own curriculum. I mean we don't even have math curriculum." For the edTPA, she decided to teach her learning segment whole class:

For Literacy, I've always had half of a group. My teacher and I would parallel teach- he teaches something else and then I teach whatever I need to teach and then we switch groups. We decided I should just do whole group because then I wouldn't need to tell my CT [Cooperating Teacher] my lesson, supply him with the books, and made sure he understood what I was trying to teach. It just seemed too much, so I just decided to do whole group (Emily, Interview #2).

During the edTPA, Emily scrapped two of her lessons at the last minute and reworked them because she questioned that she had produced what the edTPA required. She said, "Oh no. I'm doing it wrong.' It really makes you rethink the profession." She described the process as "as very stressful. I'm sure I could have done it after [spring] break, but I just wanted to get it done with. The stress of filming is crazy." Her Cooperating Teacher added on about Emily's teaching while on camera:

When you don't have an agenda, when you're not filming for the edTPA, how you teach is so much better. When you're filming, you have an agenda. You want to hit all these things. It's not as great as if you didn't film it. It is really interesting, actually (Dan, Cooperating Teacher interview).

Emily described her emotional breakdown on the last day of her unit when she taught her edTPA lesson #3 in the morning and lesson #4 in the afternoon:

In the afternoon, I'd start doing drafting [in writing]. It was so emotional. It was very emotional. They weren't paying attention. It was a lot for them to think about. It was almost Spring break and I cried in front of them. I was choking up because they weren't paying attention because this boy, he was making them laugh, and I just couldn't get their attention.

I turned to them and I start crying. I said, "This is really important to me and I'm really upset that you don't find it important as well." Then I thought, "Oh my God. This is ridiculous that I'm saying this to 24 kindergarteners" (Emily, Interview #2).

While she struggled with classroom management, the components of the edTPA also benefited her lessons:

Classroom management was hard just because of the situation that we were at- almost spring break, a lot of lessons on top of one another, but with my planning it helped me see where I could go with it. It taught me how I could scaffold my students. What I need to show them beforehand. This is deeper. This is much more, so I knew that I really needed to know what I was doing. To think beforehand how the students would react to what I was teaching them (Emily, Interview #2).

Another insight she had was about herself as a teacher:

I find myself trying to memorize my lines. I think that's a weakness because I should know what the flow of my lesson plan is already. It's hard when you're filming. You want to hit all these points because that's what the prompts are (Emily, Interview #3).

Learning from the edTPA

Despite the institutional factors that played a role in Emily's EdTPA experience (the timing of spring break, lack of curriculum at her grade level, and her perception about her methods coursework), there was also clear evidence of opportunities to learn.

Teaching a unit

Emily named unit planning as a beneficial learning experience:

It's kind of cool that the edTPA did that. The random things we do when we get observed- it feels like it's going nowhere. But with the edTPA it was cool to see that, "Okay, this is the end product I want."

I didn't even realize it with me scrapping 2 lesson plans and really not go anywhere.,, Then all of a sudden I thought about this All-About-Books unit. It made me feel like, "Wow, I could be successful as a teacher doing a unit." It helped me practice building up to something (Emily, Interview #2).

Emily's coach Helen also witnessed the benefit of having the opportunity to unit plan: "In the situation that she's been- in in her particular classroom- where she's done a lot of co-teaching, it forced her to create a unit on her own" (Coach interview). Helen goes on to explain that sometimes the teacher candidates need an assignment from the university, just so they can get access to certain experiences or opportunities.

Analysis of the lessons

The analysis component of the edTPA provided some revelations for Emily. While looking student work samples, she said:

It made me see how I can, how I can better teach. It really made me see patterns in that specific student, really focusing on my students and seeing patterns throughout the whole school year. Also it made me think more of how am I going to help them meet my expectations for that specific assignment or that specific teaching point. It helped me to see how assessment is really important (Interview #3).

Emily thought that analyzing student work was a very reflective process. She said, "I thought about these students who didn't meet it and why didn't they meet it and how I could've helped them during the process, what I could have done to be more proactive in teaching them. How could I have differentiated more?" She said that she doesn't think about this aspect during non-edTPA lessons:

You don't really think about these patterns and you don't really think about what your kids are really learning. You just kind of do it and edTPA really made me see that. It's

important that we assess what we're doing and to make sure that our kids are meeting it. Again, it's always like "how do you differentiate?" (Interview #3)

Emily shared that the way she analyzed assessments for the edTPA was a first: "the assessment part was really interesting because at the UDub we weren't taught how to analyze our work. We weren't taught how to assess our kids" She also segued into student voice:

It definitely helped me see how important assessments are during the lesson and at the end of the lesson and how to incorporate that into my lessons. It could take as little as a "thumbs up" and "thumbs down." It's really important for students to also be aware of how they're doing in order to get that help.

Collaboration

Emily and her fellow candidates held the general belief that they weren't allowed to ask questions of their teacher educators. As a result, many candidates turned towards each other for both academic and emotional support:

You feel like you're getting nothing right. You're feeling like you're going in this kind of blindly and you ask other student teachers and they're in the same boat as you. You think you get it and then all of a sudden you're like "no, this is not right."

You're always questioning yourself and it's a very scary feeling, especially with this no pass kind of a thing (Emily, Interview #3).

Despite this "blind leading the blind" situation, Emily thought there were some benefits to reaching out to others:

At the same time there was beauty in it in the fact that you know there are couple of people that I really worked with on this and we were able to be soundboards for each other and I really felt the teamwork in that sense with other classmates, you know with these two classmates that I really worked on it, that we were soundboards for one another. So it was like very different in that sense too, how really unpacking the edTPA together really built this sense of community for the people I worked with (Interview #3).

Emily's collaboration with her coach "revolved a lot around reassurance:"

The teaching segment that she was having to do and think about...it also created a lot of hardships for her too in a way so that I don't know how much she was able to learn because she was just trying to make sure she did everything right. She would ask me clarifying questions about prompts. She asked: "Is this what they mean?", "I'm not sure what this means," so we would talk about that (Helen, Coach interview).

Written reflection

Despite her initial concerns about communicating through writing, Emily described learning from writing on the edTPA:

I felt like the commentaries actually helped me reflect on my work in what I did and what is the purpose for doing what I did? So it was helpful for me actually.

It was helpful to be reflective. But writing these 11 single-page papers and the 12 single-spaced papers and the 7 single-spaced paper, it was just very overwhelming. More stressful than helpful I would say, but I would say just being able to reflect, that was the most important part. And that didn't even have to be with writing; it could've been this oral thing that we told Pearson or UDub or coaches. So I would say the reflection is more important than the writing.

Summary

The edTPA process helped Emily learn more about how to support her students:

Feedback was really important for me and them to let them know what was going on with the Thinking Web. The kids I knew who would have trouble, it reaffirmed, yeah, those kids are having trouble. So trying to figure out how can I scaffold them? (Interview #3).

Emily concluded with four takeaways from the edTPA that she will bring into her first year of teaching:

- **Using evidence to support teaching decisions.** Emily said, "For the kids that I have seen patterns of not meeting the expectations, I'm more intentional about getting to them to make sure they really understand it."

- **Inviting student voice** Emily said, “Before edTPA, I’ve never really thought about assessments or I never really thought about how are the kids going to tell me what they know?”
- **Attending to individual students** Emily plans to “be more intentional with my work and really work with those students who do not understand what's expected of them.”
- **Reflecting on students and on herself** Emily said: “What I took most away from the edTPA was the fact that these reflections are important. We always need to reflect on how our students are doing, to differentiate for your students, and to better your teaching.”

Appendix J

Case Study of Ted

Ted is an Asian-American teacher candidate in his 30s. He was born in Seattle and he attended Catholic school from Kindergarten to 12th grade. After graduating from the University of Washington, with a double major in Psychology and Society & Justice, Ted accepted a job as coach at a basketball camp for kids. He went on to work at the Boys' and Girls' Clubs for about 13 years, in various capacities such as Program Director and Athletic Director.

Ted decided to enroll in a teacher education program because he wanted to engage more directly with youths: “I still wanted to work with youth but I wanted to work with them full-time and be the major part of my job instead of working behind the scenes setting up programs for kids. I wanted to be involved directly with children” (Ted, Interview #1). Ted’s Coach and Cooperating Teacher thought that his background experience and training with youths were strengths he brought to the classroom: “His rapport was built pretty easily with students. In the classroom he is usually a personalized kind of teacher. He builds rapport with kids that's individualized and develops really nice relationships with them. (Patsy, Coach interview).

Although Ted’s parents are immigrants from the Philippines, he has never considered himself an English Language Learner (ELL):

English is a second language over there. They speak a good amount. They always spoke to me in English. I always had a very strong command of different forms of English; not just "proper English" but switching and being able to speak in different dialects with different folks that had different manners of speaking. That's something I always noticed of being able to do (Interview #1).

As I ask Ted about the edTPA, he said, “It’s tied in with getting your certification. It seems so very high-stressed and high-stakes.” He would prefer if the experience was different:

“I am of the mind where it should be an enjoyable experience because you're learning about your own pedagogy. You're learning about yourself (Interview #1). Ted compares the support he has received from the UW and from the Puget Sound Foundation, an organization that supports teachers of color:

We had a meeting about the edTPA with students that had been through it and so I felt like I've had more support from them because the support is practical. It puts me in the seat of what it's like to do the edTPA and what to look for. I feel like that's been leaps and bounds more helpful (Interview #1).

Ted did not perceive any institutional barriers to implementing the edTPA in his student teaching classroom. While he describes his Cooperating Teacher as typically orientating the class “towards her instructor-focus knowledge, content focus,” he knew he didn’t want to teach that way:

I want to teach in a way that is more engaging for my students. I want to leverage students’ experiences in their own learning. Position them as holders of knowledge too. I don't foresee myself following in her instruction methods a lot (Interview #1).

Learning from the Experience of Teaching

Ted went into great detail on the four lessons in his learning segment for the edTPA. He created a poetry unit that incorporated descriptive language, sensory words, creative writing, and an acrostic poem. Some of the challenges he had to navigate were classroom management and scheduling his unit around spring break. He realized one lesson went terribly because “it was a Friday, it was hot, and the kids were just off the wall. Classroom management-wise, it's very hard to control them” (Ted, Interview #2). However, that day was a learning experience for Ted: “This is where I had a huge informational, informative lesson for me. They were giving me feedback. I recognized ... well, I think I expected too highly of them.”

Although the lesson was not successful, Ted was able to leverage the feedback he attained from his students in order to make adjustments. Ted described to me what he would do differently the next time: “Maybe a different type of poem...just slowly scaffold it because a couple of kids didn’t get it. A lot of the kids did but the lesson...it’s just a mess (Interview #2).

He learned to use student cues to adjust the pace of his instruction:

I think in the future, what I would do is scaffold it more if I saw that the students can get it really fast. Okay, they got it so now let’s add a little bit more difficulty and do a lot more layers. That’s what I learned on the last lesson. That’s what I learned from that experience (Ted, Interview #2).

In addition, he spoke of other minor adjustments regarding pacing and student assessment:

“Little things to manage my time better so I leave them enough time to really show me what they can do at the end of class. That really informed my instruction for the third and fourth days”

(Ted, Interview #2).

Learning from Analysis of Teaching

The first two days of Ted’s learning segmented provided information for Ted to modify his subsequent lessons. He said,

In the fourth day, it was the worst day but it was in many ways, the best day, because it was the most informative. They learned by making mistakes and they’re revising. That was really informative for me and the fact that I got to reflect and assess afterwards. It was the biggest help for me.

He attributes the student information available as a result of the planning process in the edTPA:

The planning process requires you to really focus on providing resources for students so that they know what to do if they got stuck on their own, so that they don’t have to continually throw questions in class (Ted, Interview #2).

Ted had a revelation on how important the planning component of each lesson is:

Gosh, it's really instrumental. Once you do the planning, that's the heavy lifting. Then, the instructing portion of that can take you to wonderful places and you go off-track plans but the planning is the road map and it really is the backbone of the teaching method of any teaching (Interview #2).

Before the edTPA, Ted did not have the opportunity to go in such depth during his student teaching: "I'm actually doing this all now. All planning since I became a full time here. Up until this time, I had only planned individual lessons." Ted concluded with:

Definitely segment planning and the experience of planning units full time are beneficial to me. The edTPA obviously really precisely honed me on that skill to be able to do that and to understand why you teach things in a certain order of sequence and why each lesson is the way it is. There should be a reason for everything you do. No unintentional accidents (Interview #2).

Ted calls himself a "really reflective person." Regarding the edTPA, he said, "Really being analytical of your pedagogies is what's going to be the useful parts for me." Ted recounts the reflective experiences within the edTPA: "It allowed me to just slow and stop and really think 'How did my instruction fare that day?' And then, 'How am I going to use what I learned to be able to form my instruction tomorrow?'" Ted thought that the first three of his four lessons were great, "They were very involved. They were participating and they were all engaged. They want to learn about it. All of them raised their hands and contributed to the whole class. They were, for the most, on task" (Interview #2).

Patsy thought the edTPA was a helpful lesson for Ted to learn "to be reflective about who his students are. Ted, in particular, may have learned the importance of prior planning and organization" (Coach interview). Patsy described Ted as a teacher candidate:

Not the best at organizing, big picture. He missed a couple of observations that we scheduled. There was calendaring, scheduling, juggling. I saw him realize that it was going to take some very detailed training and organization to get the footage that he wanted and to get the data that he wanted in order to inform his instruction (Coach Interview).

Collaboration

While Ted describes himself as very collaborative, he didn't think collaboration was best for the edTPA: "I didn't know what I was doing so I kind of learned it on my own terms and make it have any sense to me. I think, for me, this way was more beneficial. I think it works best for my certain style." His coach thought of Ted as a social person: "He's very communicative and he's very collaborative and he's very agreeable. He has strong interpersonal skills in terms of collegial work (Patsy, Coach interview).

In an earlier interview, Ted indicated that he had fully intended to write lesson plans with his peers; he had described it as a support group of 8-9 teacher candidates who "bounce ideas off each, support each other, and used each other as resources."

However, in the midst of the edTPA process, Ted did not have the time to engage with other candidates:

I know a couple of people wanted to plan with me because they were doing the poetry unit as well but I ended up not doing it with them just because I didn't have the time to set it up. I also knew at the back of my head-I don't even know where to start. I don't have any concept so I thought it would have been not as productive or even in the reverse (Interview #2).

If the situation had been different, Ted would have preferred to plan with a more experienced teacher:

If there's a teacher, somebody I'd considered expert at planning like this, I would be completely open to work with that person because they can give me a framework and then I can therefore put my own spin on that framework. Working with another TC, I think that would have been hugely difficult because neither of us have an idea of what a framework is and so we'd spend half our time trying to find what type of framework we should go and that would take more time for me to do it on my own (Interview #2).

He added:

I think it would have been extremely valuable to do this type of planning with an experienced teacher who then gave you a sort of guideline to follow but then leave the flexibility for you to add your own touches: “Who do you have as your students and who you are as a teacher?” (Interview #2).

From General to Individual Differentiation

Before the edTPA, Ted thought about his students broadly: “I was thinking about them, in general terms, including differentiated instruction to speak to different types of intelligences and different learning styles but I wasn’t really very specifically, pointedly [looking] at specific students. I was only thinking in generalities.” [The edTPA] really forces “Well, what are you going to do for this specific student's needs?” That led Ted to the insight of:

Really focus on the student first instead of the differentiated instruction and hoping it lands on everybody. I need to start with the child first and then learn about what works with them and then learn how to apply that instead of ‘Okay, I’m going to do this in a broad range of ways that may or not get with everybody.’ (Interview #2).

Ted came to some conclusions about planning and differentiation, “I just realized again, sometimes it just feels like I don’t have time but I really [need to] plan for each individual kid.”

He lists some of the differentiation needed in his fifth grade classroom:

This kid has trouble with the directions while this kid, they may think it's way too easy and they're going to check out. Two boys and this girl, they're just so far ahead; I think they're a whole grade change above where we are so I really need to focus on, not just what gets most of them but “How do I help these students and challenge them?” and then “How do I scaffold these students to help them understand the concepts?” (Interview #2).

Ted puts a positive spin on individual student differentiation:

It really is a tough job but it's fun for me too, because I get the chance to be a detective and really use the clues that kids give me about who they are and how they learn best to conjure up appropriate activities for them to be able to understand the concepts (Interview #2).

Ted conveys his biggest insight from the edTPA as a result of analyzing the work of three focus students:

The biggest revelation was the, again, being kind of laser-focused on a student's specific needs and that I can't just make lessons that will address the majority of the class. We target the accommodations and the modification to this specific kid's needs and make sure you challenge those students where the lesson is too easy for them, and then you really scaffold for those students where the lessons are tougher for them to pick up.

As a result of having a range of students in his class, Ted said,

It's a tough job but at the same time, you want to do it. You want to be creative and it forces you to be creative, it forces you to be really intentional about the planning, how you can reach all students; I always challenge myself (Interview #2).

Ted said, "It kind of forced me to turn my perspective a little bit differently instead of just assuming that the students are going to learn it because I differentiated it." He added, "One of the things that I really wish is that, that would be modeled in our class methodology. That could be modeled but I don't think it's done enough in schools, so it wouldn't come as naturally" (Interview #2).

Fostering Independence in Students' Learning

One of Ted's takeaways from edTPA into his future teaching is allow students to work more independently:

Due to the edTPA, I wanted to really focus on providing students resources that they could consult to be able to answer their questions and to be able to teach them to be a little bit more self-sufficient and independent in finding those. They have the power to do that. That's something that is really emphasized in lesson planning.

I brought in things that I hadn't intentionally thought of before and now it's giving me very strong options in the future for my lesson planning and my instruction and my assessments. That's one thing that I'm really thankful for and grateful for (Interview #2).

Ted describes the edTPA learning experience as "extending my set-up tools and set-up ability to differentiate all sorts of students." While he differentiated before the edTPA, there is a difference now:

I did focus on it before but I think I didn't know quite what to focus on specifically as I do now. The edTPA I am using it as a tool to better my instruction. Is it all feasible? Is it all possible realistically? No, but there are things that I can learn from it and during my years coming as teacher, I will learn to be more efficient in certain areas where I can incorporate most, if not, all of it. It's been informative and enlightening really (Interview #2).