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Removing Barriers to WL Teacher Certification: A Closer Look at edTPA Ratings

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Abstract: Both within the field of world language (WL) teacher education and across teacher education in other disciplines, critiques of the edTPA have increased over the past several years. In WL language education, scholars have identified issues related to raters' use of edTPA rubrics and a serious lack of transparency about rater expertise. To better understand this issue, this study examined the problematic WL edTPA rubrics 8, 9, and 12 to compare the official performance ratings of eight candidates in one WL education program in the Southeastern United States with their performance as determined by three experts using detailed content analyses of the portfolios submitted. Each portfolio was coded, using an a-priori coding structure guided by the edTPA performance descriptors and rubrics. The findings revealed that edTPA rater expertise is a significant issue that must be unveiled because it represents another critical barrier for novices entering the profession during a severe WL teacher shortage. Based on the findings and in conjunction with the previous research, we do not recommend that states use the WL edTPA as a consequential assessment for certification.

Keywords: edTPA, performance assessment/evaluación de rendimiento, teacher preparation/preparación del profesorado, validity/validad, world language education/enseñanza de idiomas entranjeros

Introduction

As the new millennium began, Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2000) reported that four major questions have propelled educational reform in the United States (US) over the past seventy years. Starting in the 1950s, reform scrutinized educator attributes and then turned to teacher effectiveness. Later, reform centered on teacher knowledge and finally outcomes, which address student and teacher learning as well as professional practice by asking "how, by whom, and for what purposes should these outcomes be documented, demonstrated, and/or measured" (Cochran-Smith 2000: 530). While many factors helped characterize these questions, such as the public's attention to K-12 education and its perceptions of teachers as professionals, the supply of and demand for teachers, and political climate, including state and federal educational funding policies, it appears that Cochran-Smith is correct; the Outcomes question is driving reform presently. That is, how "we should conceptualize and define the outcomes of teacher education for teacher learning, professional practice, and student learning, as well as how, by whom, and for what purposes these outcomes should be documented, demonstrated, and/or measured" (Cochran-Smith 2000: 1).

According to Cochran-Smith, the most pertinent outcome of teacher education is student learning. Unlike the earlier questions of teachers and teacher education that used measures of teacher knowledge and skills, records of teacher education program inputs (e.g., courses taken) and various assessments to gauge teacher effectiveness, the measurement of student learning determines the success of teacher candidates, their students, and teacher preparation programs (Cochran-Smith 2000). The ability to gather and document evidence of student growth has become central to discussions of individual teacher and teacher education effectiveness (Dale 2014).

The latest venture and most prolific effort to assess new teachers' impacts on student learning is a high-stakes, nationally available teacher performance assessment known as edTPA—a subject-specific portfolio that requires teacher candidates to align instruction and assessment with stated student learning objectives. With respect to the teaching and learning of world languages (WLs), the purpose of the world language (WL) edTPA is to measure novice teachers' readiness to teach WLs (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity) (SCALE 2018). edTPA focuses on student learning and principles from research and theory, in which successful teachers:

- develop knowledge of subject matter, content standards, and subject-specific pedagogy;
- develop and apply knowledge of varied students' needs;
- consider research and theory about how students learn;
- reflect on and analyze evidence of the effects of instruction on student learning. (SCALE 2018: 1)

In short, edTPA was designed to engage teacher candidates in demonstrating their understanding of teaching and student learning in authentic ways (SCALE 2018). However, despite the extensive use of the edTPA across the United States and some recent studies about it (e.g., Jourdain 2018), there is a dearth of research on WL edTPA.

Review of the Literature

Historical Context

Irrespective of the focus on educational outcomes, Swanson and Hildebrandt (2017)) suggested "it is impossible to determine precisely who and what influence teacher candidate performance, either within teacher education programs or outside of them, and to what degree" (332). The researchers noted that within programs, various instructional methods courses tend to teach accepted WL teaching practices such as Communicative Language Teaching approaches (CLT) (Nunan 1991) and integrated performance assessments (Troyan, Adair-Hauck, and Glisan, 2023). With respect to outside of such classes, previous language learning opportunities, cooperating teachers, and field placements such as practicum and student teaching experiences influence teacher candidate performance and success.

Nevertheless, educational reformers were demanding results and the federal government was prepared to enact new legislation. In 2002, the President George W. Bush administration reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (United States, Department of Education 2002). This sweeping federal mandate,

among other requirements, required strenuous testing and accountability requirements for K-12 student learning, which included the field of WLs as part of the core curriculum (Swanson 2012). One of the central goals of NCLB was to guarantee that every child is taught by a highly qualified teacher—individuals with a bachelor's degree in the content area and full teacher certification. While such philosophical merits of having highly qualified teachers in every classroom were lauded, the legislation's top-down requirements placed on schools and teachers were met with criticism (Hildebrandt and Swanson, 2016). Researchers as well as state and district officials found that the highly qualified definition overemphasized pre-service teacher candidates' content knowledge (e.g., Hildebrandt and Swanson, 2016). Additionally, by centering solely on having highly qualified teachers, researchers contended that NCLB was narrowing the K-12 curriculum by prioritizing mathematics, reading, and science instruction over non-tested content areas in the core curriculum such as WLs (Rosenbusch 2005; Rosenbusch and Jensen 2004).

Near the end of the Bush administration in 2008, the California legislature mandated the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) as an assessment to measure effectiveness of beginning teachers. PACT was modeled after the National Board certification processes for veteran teachers, which was designed to measure teacher candidates' skills, knowledge, and competency to teach and assess K-12 students (Sato 2014). A few years later, SCALE unveiled edTPA as a measure of beginning teacher performance in the classroom. In 2012, edTPA was being pilot tested in a few states like Georgia and Illinois. The next year, New York and Washington became the first two states to require that teacher candidates for state teacher certification take and pass the edTPA (Choppin et al. 2016). In 2014, edTPA was in various stages of implementation in 34 states and the District of Columbia (Hildebrandt and Swanson 2019). By 2017, 747 Educator Preparation Programs in 40 states and the District of Columbia were using the edTPA (Swanson and Hildebrandt 2017). At the time of this writing, edTPA was in 976 Educator Preparation Programs in 41 states and the District of Columbia (American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education 2021).

edTPA

Developed by SCALE in collaboration with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and administered by Pearson Education Inc., edTPA is a nationally-available performance assessment of beginning teachers' readiness to teach. Among its objectives, SCALE sought to create a national common performance assessment that can be administered across institutions, disciplines, and scored reliably (Sato 2014). The edTPA can be conceptualized as a cycle of effective teaching from planning (intended teaching) to instruction (enacted teaching) to assessment (impact of teaching on student learning). It contains three parts or tasks: Planning for Instruction and Assessment (task 1), Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning (task 2), and Assessing Student Learning (task 3). Each content area varies within these three areas. For example, beginning teacher effectiveness in elementary education is measured using 18 Likert-scale rubrics while WL teacher candidate effectiveness is measured using 13 Likert-scale rubrics. Each rubric has five levels, and teacher candidates can earn between one and five points on each rubric. Thus, the maximum score for WL teacher candidates is 65 (i.e., 13 rubrics x 5 performance levels = 65). Where it is used, edTPA is typically carried out during a teacher candidates' final field experience—student teaching. With respect to the WL edTPA, the developers aligned it with the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (The

National Standards Collaborative Board 2015) and the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts* (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

General Criticisms of edTPA

As edTPA proliferated throughout the US, researchers began to examine its effects. First, edTPA was new, untested, and little was known about how it would compare to existing measures of novice teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Lewis and Young 2013). Additionally, researchers cited concerns regarding the involvement of a large corporation, Pearson Inc., to oversee the scoring of edTPA portfolios. Specifically, many find that Pearson Education's involvement in educational policy and the larger corporatization of the public education de-professionalizes teachers and teacher education (e.g., Cochran-Smith et al. 2013; Dover et al. 2015; Madeloni and Gorlewski 2013). Others note the diminished local control of teacher preparation faculty and content expertise (Hildebrandt and Swanson 2016). Still others argue that edTPA narrowed the possibilities of teaching and learning and invited corporate encroachment into education while restricting academic freedom (Madeloni and Gorlewski 2013). Furthermore, at a cost of three hundred dollars, edTPA adds an additional expense to an already costly teacher certification process, which requires teacher candidates to pay for repeated clinical background checks, state content and pedagogical assessments, and sometimes even more requirements (Hildebrandt and Swanson 2016). Hildebrandt and Swanson (2019) noted that with more than 40,000 teacher candidates expected to have submitted portfolios for official scoring in 2017, a revenue stream of twelve million dollars was created for the developers and Pearson.

WL edTPA Specific Concerns

In a seminal article regarding the WL edTPA, Hildebrandt and Swanson (2014) examined the first set of WL edTPA scores from two of the largest WL teacher preparation programs in the nation. They reported that teacher candidates scored higher on task 1 (Planning for Instruction and Assessment) and task 2 (Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning) than on task 3 (Assessing Student Learning), suggesting that these programs needed to place more emphasis on the assessment of student learning. A few years later, the same researchers qualitatively examined high-scoring WL teacher candidates' portfolios centering on the communicative learning outcomes the teacher candidates developed for their portfolios with regard to CLT approaches (Swanson and Hildebrandt 2017)), the signature pedagogy in the field. Findings from the Pearson-vetted external reviewers suggested that these edTPA portfolios were "outstanding examples of high-quality planning and highly effective teaching in the WL context" (342). However, analysis of the portfolios failed to support the notion.

Swanson and Hildebrandt (2017) reported that almost all of the "lesson plans in the dataset were not logically sequenced, and grammar lessons were inserted haphazardly with newly-learned structures not used for communicative purposes in subsequent activities" (342). Furthermore, they found that it was common to find that worksheets were implemented in lessons where learners were filling in blanks with rehearsed grammatical forms in a decontextualized manner, which contradicts CLT practices (Wong and VanPatten 2008). Specifically, there was a lack of adherence to CLT principles as well as misconceptions about the

three modes of communication (i.e., interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational). For example, one teacher candidate created an activity where learners wrote a conversation and then read it aloud to the class. The teacher candidate incorrectly categorized the activity as an interpersonal assignment. The interpersonal mode involves active negotiation of meaning where learners observe and monitor each other's spontaneous communication (Troyan, Adair-Hauck, and Glisan 2023). Swanson and Hildebrandt (2017)(noted that the activity should have been categorized as presentational, which allows for scripted, rehearsed language.

When analyzing the data by scores on individual WL edTPA rubrics, the researchers found that the lowest mean scores in the study were found on rubric 8 (Subject-Specific Pedagogy) and rubric 9 (Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness), noting in particular that the decreases in these scores mirrored a national trend of increasingly lower mean composite scores on the WL edTPA. Mean scores for WL edTPA composite scores and almost all 13 rubrics steadily fell across the nation (SCALE 2015, 2016, 2017) from a score of 40.00 to 37.20 to 35.90 points, respectively, while the number of WL edTPA submissions increased nationally from 416 in 2014 (SCALE 2015) to 891 in 2019 (SCALE 2021).

With respect to rubric 8 (Subject-Specific Pedagogy), initial research showed that external reviewers' scores were the lowest of all rubrics for task 2 (Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning) of the WL edTPA (Hildebrandt and Swanson 2014). Three years later, Hildebrandt and Swanson (2017) analyzed data from a different group of teacher candidates' WL edTPA scores and found that their scores on rubric 8 were again the lowest of the 13 rubrics. Additionally, the feedback from the reviewers was uninformative and very brief. When compared with national data, a trend was emerging with respect to rubric 8. Examination of national results from SCALE (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021) from 2014 to 2019 revealed that rubric 8 consistently had the lowest mean for WL edTPA portfolios. Such a trend was particularly puzzling given that an edTPA task force from ACTFL approached members of SCALE when the trend emerged and presented issues related to the assessment in general as well as issues circulating around rubric 8. Authors (XXXX) reported that the SCALE personnel would take their suggestions for revision into consideration when revising the subsequent WL edTPA handbook. Unfortunately, minimal changes or revisions were made to the new WL edTPA handbook, including changes to rubric 8.

External Reviewer Credentials

As noted earlier, the edTPA portfolio assessment process is facilitated by the "controversial British-owned testing and publishing conglomerate Pearson" (Journell 2020: 1), through which trained evaluators score teacher candidate performance in each of the three tasks using 13 standardized rubrics. According to SCALE (Accessed 25 Oct. 2022), edTPA scorers must possess 1) expertise in the subject matter or developmental level of the teaching field (degree and/or professional experience); 2) experience teaching in that field (or teaching methods courses or supervising student teachers in that field); and 3) experience mentoring or supervising beginning teachers, or administering programs that prepare them. Additionally, "all scorers are selected because of their verified experience both with beginning teachers and teaching the subject-matter area in which they will score" (1). Furthermore, potential reviewers must complete 20-plus hours of online training, which includes scoring practice edTPA portfolios.

However, researchers have noted that it is unclear how potential external reviewers are evaluated and then selected to serve as reviewers (Hildebrandt and Swanson 2016). SCALE

(Accessed 25 Oct. 2022) reports that "at least half of all scorers are university faculty (including clinical supervisors and cooperating teachers) and half are K-12 educators" (2). Unfortunately, evidence is lacking as to reviewers' qualifications. Deborah Greenblatt and Kate E. O'Hara reported that even teacher candidates' score reports fail to include the qualifications of their scorer nor are specific data about edTPA current scorers readily available online" (2015: 58). Sarah Jourdain noted that scorer qualifications include content expertise, but such content expertise is not clearly defined:

> Those who score the WL edTPA do not seem to be required to have a minimum documented proficiency in the language of the portfolio that they are evaluating. No mention of a minimum score on the OPI is given for scorers, for example. Teaching experience and a bachelor's degree or higher are required, but these requirements are not indicators of how proficient someone is, or how qualified, in a specific language. (81)

Adding to Jourdain's concerns, Hildebrandt and Swanson (2016) reported that during informal conversations with two external reviewers, these individuals stated that

> they were not required or asked to present a demonstration of their planning, instructional, or assessment abilities. They were not asked about their planning for instruction regimen, their ability to teach in the target language 90% of the time at all levels, or their knowledge of assessment in general or integrated performance assessments in particular. Neither of them had ever had a student teacher during the course of their careers as public school teachers; nor had they ever mentored a practicum student. (175)

Moreover, there is no documentation regarding the preparation and training of the edTPA external reviewers. For example, Swanson and Hildebrandt (2017) investigated high scoring WL teacher candidates' edTPA portfolios with respect to CLT approaches. Data analysis strongly suggested that there was serious incompatibility between what the teacher candidates' demonstrated in their portfolios and the external reviewers' high scores on the assessment. In short, data analysis revealed the external reviewers' lack of knowledge about CLT approaches with respect to the teaching and learning of WLs.

Taken collectively, a definition of content knowledge is critical given that 1) SCALE stresses that the primary concern is the development of student communicative proficiency in the target language (Hildebrandt and Swanson 2016); 2) the predictive validity of edTPA has been called into question (Goldhaber et al. 2017); and 3) that a moratorium on its use has been called for (Gitomer et al. 2019) because of research showing that edTPA is socially, economically and racially inequitable (e.g., Chang 2021; Takahama 2021). For those reasons and others, states like Georgia and New York, early adopters of edTPA, have now removed it as a requirement for teacher certification and licensure (Saunders 2022; Will 2020).

Moreover, Authors found that teacher candidates whose first language was not English scored significantly lower on the WL edTPA than those whose first language was English. Given that the WL edTPA requires candidates to write three lengthy commentaries in English (one for each task), Authors suggested that the assessment was measuring candidates' knowledge of academic English rather than their knowledge of SLA theories and WL teaching methods and

approaches. The researchers asserted that the commentaries for those seeing certification in a WL should be able to write their commentaries in their first language if that is the language for which they are seeking certification.

Research Question

Given the state of affairs regarding the WL edTPA and the issues related to particular rubrics that have been highlighted in the literature, in this qualitative study, we sought to investigate how the rubrics are being used to assess candidate performance by examining the written discourse of the focal candidates. In doing so, we sought to investigate the following question: *In what ways do the official WL edTPA ratings of a WL program's candidates reflect the ratings from an independent group of raters?* This question allowed us to focus specifically on the problematic rubrics 8 and 9, as well as any other rubrics that emerged in our analysis.

Methodology

Following IRB approval (IRB Protocol # 04027-2020), this qualitative study examined focal candidates' written discourse in their responses to WL edTPA tasks related to the problematic rubrics 8 and 9 and looked for evidence of candidates' "knowledge of the subject" (Kaplan 1982: 140–41). This analysis of the candidates' written discourse allowed us to assign ratings based on our collective expertise and compare those ratings with the official edTPA ratings. We positioned ourselves as experts since we all hold PhDs in the discipline, participated in the training when the WL edTPA was first pilot tested more than ten years ago, and have significant background in K-12 WL teaching. Moreover, we have collectively served as WL teacher preparation coordinators and teacher-educators in higher education for more than forty years.

Program

The program was an initial certification Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) with majors in Spanish or French. All of the participants in this study were majoring in Spanish. The MAT program was accredited by CAEP and endorsed by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. It also earned national recognition from ACFTL.

In addition to receiving certification in Spanish or French, candidates also earned an endorsement for teaching English to speakers of other languages. The program consisted of 36 graduate-level credits that were delivered fully online, with some courses having a synchronous delivery model (e.g., all three methods courses—Elementary Methods, Secondary Methods, and ESOL Methods) and others having an asynchronous or blended delivery model. In addition to the 36 graduate credit hours, the program also required a 3-credit prerequisite at the undergraduate level (Serving Students with Diverse Needs) and 45 hours of field experiences, most of which took place in person, while 15 hours took place online at the North Carolina Virtual Public School. Nine credit hours were taken at the graduate level in the candidate's target language (Spanish or French) and the remaining hours were spread across the methods courses and courses in Second Language Acquisition Theory and Practice, Applied Linguistics, Cultural Perspectives for ESOL, as well as a Professional Development Seminar to accompany Final Clinical Practice (formerly known as student teaching).

The Professional Development Seminar was a course designed specifically to help students complete all of the requirements for certification, including the WL edTPA, the GACE (a subject-specific consequential assessment for all teachers in Georgia), the ACTFL OPI, and other assessments and field evaluations that were required by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Candidates met with a professor who was an expert in WL education weekly throughout the semester. The course instructor went over the WL edTPA handbooks, provided a completion timeline, answered questions, and provided emotional support to students as they completed the numerous and costly required assessments for certification in a WL in Georgia.

Participants

The participants included eight WL teacher candidates enrolled in a WL teacher preparation program at a state university in the southeastern United States and who submitted their WL edTPA portfolios in March 2020. For each participant, the pseudonym, age at the time of the study, gender identity, race and ethnicity (according to university records), languages spoken, and languages that they were planning to teach are outlined in table 1.

Table 1. Participants

Candidate	Age	Gender Identity	Race/Ethnicity	Languages Spoken/Languages Planning to Teach	Context of Student Teaching Placement
Fiona	24	Female	Race: Unknown Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino	English, Spanish (Heritage Speaker)/Spanish	High School
Kimberly	35	Female	Race: White Ethnicity: Not Hispanic or Latino	English, French/French	High School
Kaylee	33	Female	Race: White Ethnicity: Not Hispanic or Latino	English, Spanish (Heritage Speaker)/Spanish	High School
Madison	28	Female	Race: White Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino	English, Spanish/ Spanish	High School
Melissa	29	Female	Race: White Ethnicity: Not Hispanic or Latino	English, Spanish/Spanish	High School

Natalie	38	Female	Race: Black Ethnicity: Not Hispanic or Latino	English, Spanish /Spanish	High School
Rita	57	Female	Race: American Indian/Alaskan Native, White Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino	English, Spanish/Spanish	High School
Julia	30	Female	Race: Black Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino	Spanish (Native Speaker) English/Spanish	High School

Four focal participants were identified based on the analysis of the data revealing a number of discrepancies between their edTPA rating and our rating of their portfolio. In this way, rather than focusing on the participants themselves, our entry point for inquiry was the edTPA rubrics, specifically rubric 8 (Subject-Specific Pedagogy) and rubric 9 (Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness) since they were highlighted as problematic in the previous literature. In addition, we also focused on rubric 12 (Student Understanding and Use of Feedback), since it was problematic in this cohort of candidates.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data sources included edTPA portfolios for all eight WL teacher candidates in the cohort. In other words, the data for each candidate included: 1) Context for Learning; 2) Task 1 Planning for Instruction and Assessment; 3) Task 2 Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning; and 4) Task 3 Assessing Student Learning. All written documents were imported into NVivo12 for coding. Each portfolio was coded, using an a-priori coding structure guided by the edTPA performance descriptors and rubrics 8, 9, and 12. This approach allowed us to clearly identity and categorize evidence based on the edTPA rubrics. Table 2 depicts the comparison of the official edTPA scores and the scores as determined by the authors. In the findings, we present the data for the rubrics in which there were discrepancies between the edTPA ratings and our expert ratings. The findings analyze these discrepancies narratively following the criteria described in rubrics 8, 9, and 12, using illustrative excerpts from the evidence provided by candidates for these rubrics.

Table 2. edTPA Score and Our Scores

Candidate	Rubric 8 Scored by edTPA	Rubric 8 Our Score	Rubric 9 Scored by edTPA	Rubric 9 Our Score	Rubric 12 Scored by edTPA	Rubric 12 Our Score
Fiona	3	3	4	4	5	5

Kimberly	2	2	2	2	2	2
Kaylee	2	5	3	3	2	5
Madison	2	2	4	4	2	2
Melissa	2	3	2	4	2	2
Natalie	3	3	2	5	2	5
Rita	1	1	1	1	2	2
Julia	3	3	1	2	2	4

Findings

Rubric 8

Rubric 8 focused on "Subject-Specific Pedagogy" and asked the rater to respond to the following question about the candidate's performance: "How does the candidate promote comparisons and connections between students' prior experiences and knowledge and the new cultural practices, products, and perspectives of the target language?" (SCALE 2019: 25) On rubric 8, edTPA raters assigned Kaylee andMelissa ratings that were lower than our ratings.

Kaylee

The edTPA rater assigned a rating of level 2 to Kaylee. The level 2 rating descriptor for rubric 8 states that the "Candidate's instruction provides limited opportunities for students to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship among the practices, products, and perspectives of the cultures(s) studied" (SCALE 2019: 25).

Kaylee's learning segment in the edTPA submission, which focused on "Childhood Memories" led students in an investigation of the daily routines of a man from Mexico and guided them in making comparisons between his daily routine practices in Mexico and theirs. Kaylee described the essence of rubric 8 in her description of this learning segment: "This topic is highly engaging because students will be able to bring their personal, cultural, and community assets to a meaningful cultural context to analyze the products and practices of people in Mexico to reach a better understanding of the perspectives of Mexican culture" (Kaylee, edTPA task 1 commentary).

Kaylee's edTPA portfolio, which contained the task 2 commentary and artifacts, provided evidence of a systematic unpacking of the focal cultural concepts in the learning segment. Those focal cultural concepts were woven across the tasks and the interactions throughout the segment. Kaylee described in detail the linkages between the cultural content across the interpretive and interpersonal tasks:

> After the interpretive lesson . . . we went on to make these comparisons on a Venn diagram on the board. This particular interpretive lesson encouraged students to consider the cultural practices in the context of childhood in Mexico. This came in lesson two of the learning segment. In lesson one, we explored the games played in Mexico during childhood. We looked at toys themselves, or the products of Mexico. This learning segment was created to build upon itself to arrive at the

perspectives that influence the products and practices of Mexican culture and how that compares to U.S. culture. (Kaylee, edTPA task 2 commentary)

In the commentary, Kaylee made explicit references not only to the cultural content that was developed throughout the learning segment, but also the *connections* that students made to this member of the focal community in Mexico (The National Standards Collaborative Board 2015; SCALE 2019):

> I wanted them to see that this man played with his friends in the street as a child and had similar chores to what they did as children . . . I talked about how a student said he had the same chore as the man in the video did. At 2:08, I also mention how he is an older man. In class, we had previously discussed the freedom of the older generation. One student, "Francisco" was allowed to play outside with neighbors as a child, but many other students, like "Franquito" were not. (Kaylee, edTPA task 2 commentary)

In making these connections and comparisons, Kaylee guided students in learning about this person and his practices, while also reflecting on their practices and the practices of their families. Finally, a final key piece of evidence presented by Kaylee was related to connections:

> Students had a survey that they had to ask their parents about their chores, freedoms, and responsibilities as a child. Now, we are not only making comparisons across cultures, but also across generations. (Kaylee, edTPA task 2 commentary)

In this instance, Kaylee highlighted the connections that the students made with their own families in the learning segment. At the beginning of the segment, students completed a survey with their parents that enabled deep, meaningful comparisons and connections in the world language classroom. Given this ensemble of evidence presented by Kaylee, rather than the assigned rubric 8 rating of level 2, our rating of Kaylee's work in this edTPA portfolio was level 5 "Candidate's language tasks encourage use of the target language both within and beyond the school setting for personal enjoyment and enrichment" (SCALE 2019: 25).

Melissa

Similar to Kaylee, the edTPA rater assigned a rating of level 2 to Melissa. The learning segment presented by Melissa focused likewise on daily routines, but within two different cultural contexts of Spain and Panama through a variety of activities across the modes of communication. The central task that highlights the deep integration of cultural knowledge as described in rubric 8 focused on the comparison between the life and daily routine in a school in Panama and the students' school and daily life at home.

In the commentary for task 2, Melissa described interactions with the students during instruction of the learning segment that was featured in two video clips from the instruction. In analysis of the first clip, Melissa described how the students were guided through the interpretation of a video featuring Agustín, who was from Spain and described his daily routine. As the students watched the video, Melissa paused the video frequently to ask questions,

detailing the ways in which knowledge of that particular cultural perspectives was constructed interactively with the students during the lesson. Through Melissa's questioning of the students, they were able to:

> dig deeper and think about their own personal assets and overall community assets regarding daily routine differences. After watching the video, the students read an authentic article . . . to learn about a different part of the world. They were encouraged to not only think about how the cultures differ, but what they had in common as well. (Melissa, edTPA task 2 commentary)

In addition, Melissa described an interpersonal activity that followed the video interpretation in which the students used the knowledge that they gained through the interpretation and discussion of the video in which Agustíndescribed his routine:

> Different questions pertaining to the topic were written in the pentagonal shapes of a soccer ball. Students were not choosing a question of their choice, but at random based on how the ball was caught and where their thumb landed. This engaged students at a much higher level than a simple question and answer session. They were able to think about the target culture differences while answering the questions based on their own daily routine. (Melissa, edTPA task 2 commentary)

Given the evidence provided by Melissa, rather than the assigned rubric 8 rating of level 2, our rating of Melissa's work in this edTPA portfolio was level 3 "Candidate's instruction provides opportunities for students to demonstrate an understanding of the relation among the practices, products, and perspectives of the culture(s) studied and their own experiences and knowledge" (SCALE 2019: 25).

Rubric 9

Rubric 9 "Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness" asked the rater to respond to the following question about the candidate's performance: "How does the candidate use evidence to evaluate and change teaching practice to meet students' varied learning needs?" (SCALE 2019: 26). On rubric 9, edTPA raters assigned Melissa, Natalie, and Julia ratings that were lower than our ratings.

Melissa

The edTPA rater assigned a rating of level 2 to Melissa on rubric 9. The level 2 rating descriptor for rubric 9 states that the "Candidate proposes changes to teacher practice that are superficially related to student learning needs (e.g., improving directions)" (SCALE 2019: 26). In the response, Melissa immediately addressed what she would do to better address the needs of "a variety of learners in the class" and made reference to concrete examples in the video to support the changes that needed to be made:

Throughout the video, I do act out many things, but I believe I could do even more of this to support those lower-level students, especially. I also would replay certain clips of the video when I do not get a confident response by most students. (Melissa, edTPA task 2 commentary)

In addition, Melissa identified the ways in which speaking tasks could be better differentiated in the future:

In regards to the second clip of the interpersonal activity, next time I would use the same daily routine questions, but divide students based on their proficiency levels. I would scaffold a conversation for students needing additional support. (Melissa, edTPA task 2 commentary)

In the justification for the changes proposed, Melissa clearly linked the observations and plans for the future to appropriate theory and made specific observations about how to better address the needs of the heritage language learner in the class. Finally, building upon the collective challenges that Melissa observed on the part of some of the students during the lesson, she planned for strategies to make the input in the video they were to watch more comprehensible to the students:

The most important aspect of the video when helping students to develop communicative proficiency is that they are able to comprehend the text and audio. If they are unable to do so, for example, the audio contains too much unknown vocabulary, the students will be more likely to become anxious, confused and unwilling to receive the authentic input. (Melissa, edTPA task 2 commentary)

Throughout this plan, Melissa linked to the scholarship on making input comprehensible in order to build proficiency (Mitchell et al. 2019). Given the evidence provided by Melissa, rather than the assigned rubric 9 rating of level 2, our rating of Melissa in this edTPA portfolio was level 4 "Candidate proposes changes that address individual and collective learning needs related to the central focus" and "Candidate makes connections to Second Language Acquisition/Teaching research and/or theory" (SCALE 2019).

Natalie

The edTPA rater likewise assigned a rating of level 2 to Natalie on rubric 9, a rating that did not reflect our rating of the Natalie's performance. While Natalie did not outline changes that would be made to address specific individual needs, changes to address the needs of the entire group were proposed:

I would have liked to have provided students time to confer first with a partner about the comprehension extension conversation questions (sic), and then given students an opportunity to share with the class. This would have maximized communicative practice time for all students. (Natalie, edTPA task 2 commentary)

Natalie noted that the attention was on students' particular needs:

as I focused first on assisting my students with learning needs, I did not get a chance to monitor as many students who are higher performing, missing opportunities to also push them to communicate beyond the question.

However, Natalie wrote a highly descriptive and well-developed justification of the changes based on second language acquisition theories. It is in this section where Natalie's plan clearly articulated both the collective and the individual needs of the class:

> In regard to the missed opportunity (conferring with a peer before responding to the whole group), it would have allowed all students to have more opportunities for output, and would have also given them some time to build upon their response, having collaborated (sic) with a peer first, "contributing to their development of fluency." As Swain's Output Theory (1995) states, having students produce output is "more challenging for the learner" (Johnson 2013: 91). This tactic of students collaborating within their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky) would have been ideal especially for low and middle performing students (Sandrock 2010: 70). It would have given students the opportunity to speak with complete sentences and (sic) allowed students to practice the new language forms and functions at hand even more than what I was able to accomplish by appealing to the whole group. (Natalie, edTPA task 2 commentary)

Natalie provided a similar plan for future instruction for both the interpersonal and presentational modes of communication. In addition, Natalie integrated theories such as Lev Semenovich Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development—one among several others—which was well aligned with the changes Natalie described needing to make. Overall, the ways in which Natalie used theory to address collective and individual needs provided sufficient evidence for our rating of level 5 "Candidate justifies changes using principles from Second Language Acquisition/Teaching research and/or theory" (SCALE 2019: 26).

Julia

The edTPA rater assigned a rating of level 1 to Julia on rubric 9. While Julia's response was underdeveloped, it did suggest changes and mention appropriate theories.
One modification that Julia proposed was based on the need for some students have additional support as they interpreted a video that was the focus of the interpretive task:

> I would have added a paper copy of the questions being asked to my students who are visual learners and may not have understood the questions I was asking . . . some students . . . need to look at the questions because they do not quite understand what is being said orally. (Julia, edTPA task 2 commentary)

While Julia's response linking the proposed changes to theory did not use proper citations, she did indeed make appropriate links to theory, such as the input hypothesis:

Being that the input hypothesis may be one of the most important concepts in second language acquisition, it is imperative that I ensure that all students are receiving the proper input whether it be through listening or reading. (Julia, edTPA task 2 commentary)

A level 1 rating, which was assigned by the edTPA was inappropriate because Julia proposed superficial changes and made superficial and underdeveloped connections to theory. For these reasons, our rating of Julia's performance was level 2.

Rubric 12

Rubric 12 "Student Understanding and Use of Feedback" asked the rater to respond to the following question about the candidate's performance: "How does the candidate support focus students to understand and use the feedback to guide the development of communicative proficiency in the target language?" (SCALE 2019: 26).

Kaylee

The edTPA rater assigned Kaylee's response a rating of level 2, which indicates that the "Candidate provides vague description of how focus students will understand or use feedback." (SCALE 2019: 33). This rating did not correspond to our rating because her evidence was thorough, well supported, and well written for all three focus students. For example, in the evidence for Kaylee's Focus Student #1 who had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Kaylee described close monitoring of the student,

using a tracking tool and weekly check-ins and utilize repetition of directions. She stays after school twice a week where we work on notes about Spanish sounds. She has progressed very far. I pointed out a specific vowel sound that she could keep working on, the letter "e" in Spanish. One of her strengths is that she works hard to be prepared. On her rubric, I acknowledged this strength by writing that I noticed that she rehearsed a lot. I commended her for taking her time to think through the question before answering. I pointed out an error with agreement, but informed her that it did not impede comprehension. (Kaylee, edTPA task 3 commentary)

Later, in the description of Focus Student #1's understanding and use of the feedback, Kaylee described that the student understood the feedback:

because she mentioned her pronunciation in her student reflection. In class, she mentioned that she likes when we talk through things as a class. I will continue my bi-weekly tutoring sessions with her. I have a book that I use and we do audio and pronunciation practice targeted at both the morpheme and the word-level. She also pays close attention to the input in the target language that I give when taking notes in class. In future learning segments, I will prompt her to carefully consider how the cultural context relates to her own personal life so that she is able to draw a deeper person connection to the material. I will challenge her to elaborate on

how things relate to her and her life by creating a mind map with her in the middle as we move through learning segments. (Kaylee, edTPA task 3 commentary)

This rich description provided by Kaylee is representative of the evidence provided for all three focus students. For this reason, our rating on rubric 12, given the evidence provided by Kaylee is level 5 "Candidate explicitly identifies support strategies that will guide one or more focus students to understand and use feedback" (SCALE 2019: 33). The discrepancy in this particular rubric is notable because it was egregious.

Natalie

The edTPA rater also assigned Natalie's response a rating of level 2 on rubric 12. As in the previous case, Natalie was rated well below our rating of the performance level based on the evidence submitted. Natalie wrote a highly descriptive and detailed response related to rubric 12 that provided rich detail for the feedback she provided to the three focus students and their use of that feedback. Natalie contextualized the feedback offered to the students on the assessment rubric she used:

> In the comments section I state the areas in which students have done well in first, under the header: **Teacher comments: Me gustó mucho..../I really liked....** These comments address their strengths demonstrated in their summative assessments and commonly link to the personal, cultural, and community assets. (Natalie, edTPA task 3 commentary)

The description that Natalie provided for Focus Student 1, the low performing student, was representative of the rich detail provided in the feedback descriptions for all three focus students:

> For Focus Student 1 (Low) I commented on (sic) an area of improvement noted from her previous summative assessment, as she added several more details and several unit vocabulary terms, which helped demonstrate her communicative proficiency for the language objectives for the unit. I also applauded her for using a cultural comparison from the listening exercise to make a personal connection to the L2 speaker, which also tied to her personal assets. This student also posed multiple (more than required) interpersonal questions to her classmates, which I noted as positive comments for feedback. (Natalie, edTPA task 3 commentary)

In describing how Focus Student #1 will use the feedback provided, Natalie referenced a personal learning plan that was created in collaboration with the student and described her clear role in ensuring that the student is supported:

> For Focus Student 1 (Low) I will assure that her personal plan for next steps include improvement in pronunciation and formation of more complex sentences. I will also hold her accountable for these areas for the next learning segment and summative assessment, in which we will track this growth and conference together, as was done for this Learning Segment. (Natalie, edTPA task 3 commentary)

Similar to Kaylee, our rating for Natalie on rubric 12 was level 5.

Julia

The edTPA rater also assigned Julia's response a rating of level 2 on rubric 12, a rating that did not reflect our rating of her performance. Julia clearly contextualized the role of feedback for support the three focus students:

> Since all three of my focus students were on three different levels of proficiency, a variety of feedback was required in order for the students to see their improvement on their level of proficiency. (Julia, edTPA task 3 commentary)

In the description of the feedback provided, Julia also related the feedback provided to one focus student to the feedback provided to the others, providing evidence of a systematic routine for feedback:

> Focus Student #2 also received a written feedback. Similar to focus student 1, I also began focus student 2's feedback with her strengths and then continued to talk about improving her sentence sequence. On her reflection from my feedback, the student stated that she recognizes her errors and that she will work hard on ensuring that she is using complete sentences to express herself in the target language. During our one-on-one meeting, she stated that she knew what she had to say when practicing with her partner, but when it was time for her presentation, she forgot some of the words. (Julia, edTPA task 3 commentary)

This feedback routine and reflective protocol described for Focus Student 2 was representative of how Julia described the feedback provided to all three focus students. Subsequently, in the description of how the students would use the feedback, Julia described how the students as a collective would use the feedback and provided explicit detail about Focus Student 1:

> During the learning segment, I did not have an opportunity to scaffold all students who were struggling in certain areas, but I was able to scaffold focus student 1. On clip 1, I allowed the student to answer my spontaneous question in English to help the student understand what I was asking him. I was happy to see that the student understood what was being asked and attempted to answer the question. I will continue to support this student and other students through scaffolding the material in order for those students to succeed. (Julia, edTPA task 3 commentary)

Given the evidence that Julia provided related to rubric 12 and the description of Focus Student 1's use of feedback, our rating was level 4, the "Candidate describes how one or more focus students will understand and use feedback to address a specific learning need" (SCALE 2019: 33).

Discussion

Together, the evidence from the focal candidates' edTPA portfolios that led to our expert ratings present concerning discrepancies in the ratings for the rubrics 8, 9, and 12. It is unclear whether the raters did not read the candidates' edTPA portfolios well or whether they lacked the knowledge of SLA theories and WL teaching methodologies to effectively analyze candidates' submissions. As the findings of this study demonstrate, a clear mismatch exists between edTPA rater scores and our expert ratings. Moreover, the evidence from our four focal candidates' edTPA submissions demonstrated knowledge of specific content that should have resulted in higher ratings on each of the respective rubrics, but that were either dismissed or ignored by the raters. More troublesome to ponder is the possibility that the raters did not have the same high level of subject matter expertise as the candidates themselves. The evidence from the examination of the discourse of these candidates' edTPA responses provides further qualitative evidence that calls into question the validity and reliability of the WL edTPA. These results— when viewed in light of the prior research on the edTPA that has questioned its validity (Gitomer et al. 2019), and outlined its major issues (e.g., Jourdain 2018; Kissau and Algozzine 2017; Russell and Davidson-Devall 2016; Troyan and Kaplan 2015)—have led to more questions than answers.

Given the results of this study and the high stakes and costly nature of this assessment, SCALE should clearly provide the following information for the WL community: 1) who are the raters? 2) what principles for validity guided the development of the edTPA for WL? 3) what is the reliability data for the WL edTPA? and 4) how are WL raters vetted and trained? There is a clear lack of transparency from SCALE on these issues and the WL community should demand that they be answered, especially given the critical shortage in WL teachers across the country (Hildebrandt and Swanson 2016; Swanson and Hildebrandt 2018). We can no longer support consequential assessments, such as the WL edTPA, until these questions are answered. The discrepancies impacted four of the eight candidates in this program. All of the discrepancies would have resulted in either 1) candidates paying to resubmit portions of the edTPA to be rescored by Pearson or 2) face non-completion/non-licensure. Given our critical shortage of WL teachers, we cannot afford to erect additional roadblocks for the certification of qualified candidates. The evidence from the rubric 9 ratings suggests that edTPA raters simply are not expected to be experts in nor are they trained in language acquisition theories. In several cases, the candidates clearly and articulately integrated theory into their plans for future instruction, yet they were rated well below our scores of their performances levels.

The results of this study, taken together with the studies from the review of literature, are very concerning. Hildebrandt and Swanson (2014) found that rubric 8, which examines subject-specific pedagogy, was among the most problematic. This study confirms their findings. At the very least, SCALE should ensure that raters are trained on CLT, proficiency-based language instruction, and theories of SLA. In the particular cases examined in this study, the candidates' level of expertise may have exceeded those of the raters. However, the very limited rater feedback provided made it difficult to determine the raters' levels of expertise. As Hildebrandt and Swanson (2014) noted, edTPA rater feedback has a tendency to be very brief and largely uninformative. The feedback from the edTPA raters in this study was likewise uninformative and very brief.

Finally, approximately half of the participants in this study were either heritage or first language speakers of Spanish. Given the findings of Russell and Davidson-Devall, speakers whose first language is not English appear to be at a disadvantage when taking the WL edTPA. The results of this study suggest that SCALE should strive to include more raters who are first

language speakers of the languages that they are evaluating or candidates should be permitted to submit their commentaries in the language in which they are seeking certification.

Conclusion

Since the results of this study have been analyzed, Georgia (where this study took place) has opted to exclude edTPA as a consequential assessment for certification. Given that the validity of edTPA has been called into question (e.g., Gitomer et al. 2019; Goldhaber et al. 2017) and that there are social, economic, and racial inequities among candidates' scores across disciplines (Chang 2021; Takahama 2021), many states are now beginning to discontinue edTPA as a consequential assessment for certification. While the authors of the present manuscript would support a fair national assessment for WL teacher certification that would be valid across the country, the multiple problems addressed in this study, especially the issue of rater reliability, preclude the authors from supporting the edTPA as a valid assessment of WL candidates' abilities to plan for, instruct, and assess student learning. Until SCALE and Pearson address the concerns that were outlined in this article, the authors cannot recommend that states use the WL edTPA as a consequential assessment for certification.

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