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Michelle Giles Karen Dunlap



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THE TEXAS FORUM OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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The Texas Forum of Teacher Education, a publication of the Texas Association of Teacher Educators (TxATE), is a referred journal published once annually.

Articles in the journal are directed to both campus-based and field-based Texas teacher educators. TxATE members, including graduate students, are encouraged to submit manuscripts. Authors must be active members as a condition for publication.

The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Texas Association of Teacher Educators.

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Editor's Introduction

The 2019 issue of the *Texas Forum for Teacher Education* provides a glimpse into lessons learned as well as challenges faced by educators in both K-12 and higher education settings. The lessons and challenges discussed throughout this issue include demands for online courses and programs, implementing standardized performance assessments during clinical teaching, experiences of undocumented undergraduates, special education teacher preparation, principal perceptions of the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-Tess), instructional strategies for preservice teachers, experiencing schools in high-needs contexts, teacher retention in rural schools, and preservice teacher efficacy in culturally responsive teaching and social-emotional learning. All of the contributions made to this issue will help to inform those involved in K-12 and higher education to better prepare them for the challenges ahead.

The issue starts with an article by Shannon Stoker that examines professor perceptions of training for the online classroom and sheds light on the importance and need for universities to prepare their professors for transitioning to the online format. Laura Allen and Courtney Crim's article discuss the lessons learned from implementing a standardized performance assessment during clinical teaching. An article by Franklin Allaire examines emergent themes from a case study of first-year experiences of three female undocumented undergraduates in Texas. Michelle Simmons, Laurie Sharp, and Franklin Goode examine the preparation practices teacher educators use to develop understandings for learner development, learning differences, and learning environments among preservice special educators. An article by Eddie Damien and Thomas Cothorn discuss elementary campus principal perceptions of the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Edward Steffek and colleagues discuss modeling instructional strategies for preservice teachers by using technology in the classroom to enhance student learning and engagement. An article by Jeffrey Keese and Andrew Kwok investigate preservice teacher field trips as opportunities to experience schools in high-needs contexts. Sandra Cerda, Veronica Estrada, and Velma Menchaca examine teacher retention in rural schools nested in large districts. The issue concludes with an article by Hersch Waxman and colleagues that examines preservice teacher efficacy in culturally responsive teaching and social-emotional learning.

In closing, I would like to say thank you to this year's editorial team, Associate Editor Karen Dunlap (Texas Women's University) and our Past Managing Editor, Dr. Sarah McMahan (Texas Women's University). Thank you for your commitment to ensuring the successful delivery of the 2019 Forum.

As we turn to our next edition, authors can find the 2020 call for papers at the end of the journal. The 2020 deadline for manuscripts is **June 12, 2020**. Authors are to direct submissions to the 2020 Managing Editor, Karen Dunlap (KDunlap@twu.edu). If you have any comments about this edition, please email me at giles@uhcl.edu.

Respectfully,
Dr. Michelle Giles
2019 Managing Editor

PROFESSOR PERCEPTIONS OF TRAINING FOR THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

Shannon Stoker

Texas Wesleyan University

Abstract

As universities transition programs and courses to the online format, there are many factors to consider. Perhaps one of the most important factors to consider when converting courses to the online format is the instructor. The instructor is an integral component of any effective classroom; therefore, it is necessary for universities to prepare their instructors for the demands and unique pedagogy required of the online classroom. The purpose of this study is to convey the perceptions of professors who have received training for transitioning to the online classroom as well as the expectations of professors who will be participating in training for the online classroom. The researcher of this study created and administered a survey to university professors who had participated in the university's online training program and now teach online courses. Their survey included questions about the effectiveness of the university's training, their confidence post-training, and attitude toward the online format. The survey revealed the importance and need for universities to prepare their professors for the transition to the online format. This study will provide universities insight on professor perceptions and expectations when transitioning their programs to the online format.

Keywords: online classroom, professor perceptions, faculty training, online training

Online education is a relatively new trend in the traditionally steeped discipline of education, especially when considering that formal education in the United States has existed since the 17th century (Gray, 2008). While the one-room schoolhouse no longer dots the landscape, our education system still clings to many of the same pedagogical philosophies that permeated the early days of schooling. As technology intersects our everyday lives, education is being forced to alter its pedagogy. Ironically, the place where some of the most time-honored educational traditions exist is where online education is progressing at a rapid pace (Bucknell, 2016; Thompson, 2017; Wood, 2016). While universities continue to move forward with online education, they need to consider the preparedness and attitude of the professors transitioning from the traditional format to the online format. Understanding how professors are transitioning to the online format is necessary for a successful online program.

The most recent statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics (2016) account for almost six million students enrolled in at least one distance education course. There are just under 3 million enrolled in an online program. Whether the need created the entity, or the entity created the need, online learning is now a driving force in higher education.

Background

The first entirely online course came into existence in 1981 as a non-credit course. Since that time, online courses have turned into online degree programs and fully online universities. The looming presence and growth of online universities have required many traditional brick and mortar universities, known for being rigid and unaltering, to re-think their educational platform (Casement, 2013; Wood, 2014). Traditional Ivy League schools like Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania now offer extension programs that provide students with the opportunity to attend prestigious schools through virtual platforms (Johnson, 2013). Other top universities such as Stanford, Yale, and the University of Michigan offer MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), certifications, and continuing education courses online to individuals seeking to enrich their lives without having to be admitted to a rigorous program (Billsbury, 2013; Schaffauser, 2015, Yale University, n.d.).

Statement of the Problem

As with any change in an organization, there will be individuals resistant to the new way of doing things. In higher education, it is the professors who are often resistant to the change (Harrison et al., 2017; Stoker, 2018). Research has unveiled that there is resistance when moving a professor from the traditional classroom to the online classroom (Chancey, 2016; Stoker, 2018). Challenges contributing to professor resistance are communication, high enrollment numbers, time and the impersonal nature of teaching online (Trammell & LaForge, 2017; Wessel, 2016). These hurdles leave professors in a problematic scenario when being required to teach an online class. Universities can alleviate these concerns by evaluating their practices and implementing a well-developed change initiative that includes training their faculty for the dynamic of online classroom.

Statement of Purpose

As with any doctrine, theory or ideology in education, research is necessary to gain a current picture on the status of the subject matter as well as understand where future research is warranted. Current research of online education examines everything from online pedagogy to online efficacy (Chancey, 2018; Cho & Cho, 2016; Colferai, & Gregory, 2015). Research documents that the continuing changes associated with online learning justify the need for future studies.

The purpose of this study is, first, to investigate the training and professional development used by one university transitioning their programs to the online format. Professors that are required to move to their traditional classrooms to the online format are often resistant and not prepared for the change (Brown, 2016; Chancey, 2018; Nicoll, 2016). When universities change their programs to the online format, they must prepare their professors for the online classroom to ensure a successful transition. Second, the research will investigate how professors view the online format. The study will examine what contributes to a professor's confidence as they transition to teaching online. A potential outcome of the study will be to give universities insight on how to prepare professors for the online format to give their students the best opportunity to be successful.

Research Questions

- 1) How beneficial is professional development in preparing professors to teach online courses?
- 2) What are professors' perceptions of teaching in the online format?
- 3) What factors contribute to a professor's confidence in teaching an online course?

Theoretical Framework

The theory embedded throughout the research is the organizational change theory. "Organizational change is the process in which an institution changes its culture, operational methods, structure, strategies or technologies" (Roberts, 2018, p. II). Implementing new programs, whether in an educational or non-educational setting, requires a system change and not just a change of procedure or policy here and there. Engaging in an online program is culture change that requires a university to re-evaluate their course structure, technology utilized for the online format, and strategy for training their professors. Individuals have a natural resistance and fear of change. These uncertainties can be alleviated if universities understand the dynamics of organizational change and how it affects its programs and personnel. Ensuring professors are trained and prepared for the online format is vital to the organizational change when transitioning to the online format.

Significance of The Study

This study will contribute to the growing literature of online education. Specifically, how universities prepare their staff for the online learning classroom. The study will present an additional piece of research to assist universities and instructors in understanding how to support professors transitioning to the online format and build a positive culture towards online education.

Literature Review

The Question of Quality Within Online Education

A review of current literature regarding online education will reveal that there is still much to learn about the medium and its effectiveness as compared to face-to-face format (Bosshard & Chiang, Bucknell, 2016; O'Neill, & Sai, 2014; Tichavsky,

Hunt, Discoll, & Jicha, 2015). Whether courses are taken online or in a traditional classroom, the cost of college continues to rise (Thompson, 2017). The amount of money and time spent on a college education should lead students to ask, “will I receive a quality education from an online course?” Research has addressed the concerns on the effectiveness of online education, but they have not alleviated the apprehensions of students, instructors and the public (Bosshard a& Chiang, 2016).

Studies have revealed that while there are no significant differences in student outcomes between online education courses and brick and mortar classrooms, there are concerns of online education not providing an equal learning experience as its face to face counterpart (Arasaratnam-Smith & Northcote, 2017; Billsbury, J. 2013; Bucknell, 2016; Harrison et al., 2017). The brick and mortar classroom provides students with a physical presence and the ability to know their instructor’s personality (Tichavsky, Hunt, Discoll, & Jicha, 2015). Some professors try to replicate the classroom environment through online communities where students can engage in conversations via a discussion board. However, discussion boards cannot replace the immediate responses and non-verbal communication that often permeates a face to face discussion (Arasaratnam- Smith, 2017).

Research on varying universities will declare that not all online instruction is equal. With diverse instructional platforms, faculty training, and pedagogy, a student’s online experience can look different from university to university and professor to professor (Springer, 2016). Courses across the disciplines can determine the effectiveness of the online class as well. In a study comparing differences in online discussions between education and engineering students, education students were found to have interactive, social discussions amongst one another, while the engineering students’ posts were content related with higher levels of thinking (Redmond, Devine, & Basson, 2014). The differences within discipline is one more variable for professors to navigate when instructing an online course.

The University and The Professor

“As with any instructor at any level, if they (professors) do not have the right attitude about their course, it becomes evident in their teaching” (Stoker, 2018, p.26). This is a concern since many online instructors are former traditional classroom teachers (Harrison et al., 2017; Trammell & LaForge, 2017). How they transition to the online environment is vital to their students’ success.

Many of those challenges for professors moving to the online format can be eased through proper training by the university. Several studies call attention to the fact that many professors are not prepared for the online format (Brown, 2016; Chancey, 2018; Nicoll, 2016; Vilkas, 2017). Providing professor support should include training on the school’s LMS (the technology medium used to deliver the course), course implementation, student expectations, online discourse, and communication with students (Brown, 2016). Managing the online classroom requires an instructor to be actively present and respond when needed.

The Professor and Training

Professional development trainings for teaching online are not as vast as the face to face counterpart; however, the medium is expanding with numerous universities offering their professors support for teaching online. The University of Wisconsin – Madison’s non-credit certification course is available to their students as well as anyone desiring to teach online (University of Wisconsin – Madison, n.d.). Rutgers University also offers an online teaching certificate for those who complete their program (Rutgers University, n.d.). Southern Methodist University and the University of Central Florida provide courses and training to prepare their faculty for the dynamic of teaching online (SMU, n.d.; University of Florida, n.d.). The courses at the above motioned universities enlist similar learning goals that focus on understanding the online learner, preparing course modules, planning online activities, and creating learning objectives.

The university that was the focus of this study requires their faculty to complete their online course. The course is offered at various times throughout the year and is completed entirely online over a six-week period. The course is taught through a series of modules with fellow faculty. The cohort model allows faculty to work as an online class to understand the role of the student as well as the facilitator. Professors participating in the course create activities, collaborate on projects, and facilitate discussion forums. Once the course is completed, the faculty member is certified and able to teach an online course.

There are contradictions within the online education research field regarding the effectiveness of online courses. Some studies conclude that online learning can be just as effective as the traditional classroom (Bosshard & Chiang, 2016). Still, there are concerns that the online classroom cannot replicate the personal nature of the traditional classroom (Arasaratnam- Smith,

2017). More recent research has focused on professor resistance towards the online format, online course design, and professional development for professors who transition to the online format (Brown, 2016; Chancey, 2018; Nicoll, 2016, Springer 2016, Wessel, 2016). These studies may help universities and professors understand what makes an online course successful and possibly bring uniformity to the question of whether or not an online course is as effective as its brick and mortar counterpart.

Methodology

Research Design

This empirical research study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. The study investigated the professional development training program at a private university in North Texas. The training is required for professors who desire to teach an online course. Upon completion of the seven-week course, professors receive a certification that allows them to teach online at the university. The course provides professors training on developing engaging course materials, facilitating online discussions, writing student-centered learning objectives, and implementing evidence-based practices in the online format. The researcher created an original survey to reflect professors' perceptions of online education, the training received for teaching online, and their confidence to teach online prior to and after the training. The survey was sent to professors who have participated in the training and are currently teaching online.

Both descriptive statistics and a multiple regression analysis were utilized for this study as the researcher was seeking to understand the factors that contribute to a professor's confidence when teaching in the online format. The study also investigated the factors that contribute to a professor's perception of the online format. This could potentially provide the researcher insight into how effective the university's training program is in preparing professors for teaching online.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to investigate the professor's perceptions, and impact of the training was a Qualtrics survey. An eleven-question Likert scale survey was sent to 39 professors who have previously participated in the university's training program for teaching online. The questions on the survey asked professors about the benefit of the training, their confidence before and after the training, what they will implement from the training, and their perception regarding the effectiveness of online education.

Participants

The participants for the study will include professors from a private university in North Texas who have completed the course required to teach in the online format. The participants are either currently teaching or will teach an online course. The participants' teaching experience ranges from less than three years to more than eleven years.

Data Collection

Surveys were sent to 39 professors via email. A link to the survey was provided in the email to allow participants' response to remain anonymous. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey. A second email was sent as a reminder mid-way through the allotted time. Twenty-one participants responded to the survey ($n = 21$).

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential analyses were utilized for this research using IBM SPSS statistics. Multiple regression is the appropriate analysis for this research scenario as the researcher seeks to understand a potential predicting relationship between select variables and professor confidence in teaching online courses (Fields, 2013). The variables considered for this study are number years teaching, confidence before training, and the professor's perception of the effectiveness of online education (Figure 1). The analysis will determine if any or a combination of all the variables can predict a professor's confidence level after participating in the training.

Data Assumptions

For a researcher's results to be considered valid and trustworthy, certain assumptions regarding the data must be true as

based on the 2006 publication by the American Education Research Association (AERA) entitled *Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA publications*. For this study, the following nine data assumptions were met. 1) Variable types were measured as follows: Dependent variable of confidence of teaching online after training was measured using interval values. The independent variable of confidence before training was measured using interval values. The independent variables of effectiveness of online education and years of experience were measured as categorical with two categories for each variable, 2) All variables in the research were composed of multiple values and no variables with zero variance were found, 3) No perfect multicollinearity was found. None of the variables were highly correlated. All variables had correlations of .8 or lower. The highest correlation between variables identified was between confidence before training and confidence after training at .648, 4) All known relevant variables were included in the analysis, 5) Homoscedasticity was achieved. The ZRESID and ZPRED plots revealed no evidence of a relationship between the variables, 6) The independent errors are within the acceptable range of 1-3 at 2.397 on the Durbin-Watson analysis, 7) The ZRESID histogram revealed that the residuals are normally distributed, 8) Independence of observation was achieved. One person's score did not influence another participant's score, 9) The relationship being modeled is assumed to be linear.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean, standard deviation, and measures skewness and kurtosis were measured for the following categorical variables: confidence rating before taking the course, how much of the course they will use, how much of their current course will need to be redesigned, confidence rating after the training, how beneficial the training

was, and their perspective on the effectiveness of online education.

Figure 1: Descriptive Statistics

		Conf prior	Use foot	Redesign course	Conf after	Foot beneficial	Effect ol ed
N	Valid	21	20	21	20	18	21
	Missing	0	1	0	1	3	0
Mean		2.667	3.550	2.000	2.700	3.500	3.286
Std. Deviation		1.017	.826	.633	.923	.515	1.309
Skewness		.129	-1.423	.000	-.214	0.00	-.440
Kurtosis		-1.217	3.893	-.132	-.595	-2.267	-.670
Range		3.00	4.00	2.00	3.00	1.00	4.00

The table, as shown in figure 1, displays the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and range for the survey questions. When comparing the confidence of professors before and after participating in the training, there was a slight increase in the mean. The mean rating before the training was 2.667 with the mean rating after the training was 2.700. With the rating on a scale from 1 - 4, the professors' confidence both before and after the training is closer to the more confident side of the scale. The skewness and kurtosis for both variables were within the normal range of +/-3 (Huck, 2004).

While the increase was minimal, the professors' scores on the value of the training gave more insight to the effectiveness of the course. Professors rank how much of the course they would use on a scale from 0 - 5 with 0 not sure (0 was disregarded in the mean), 1 – nothing, 2 – very few strategies, 3 – select strategies, 4 – many strategies, and 5 – everything. The mean score for course usage was 3.550 (Figure 1). While the skewness and kurtosis were within the normal range, the skewness was pulled toward the lower end of the scores and the kurtosis was leptokurtic indicating the range of scores were narrow and focused around the mean. This is supported by the standard deviation at .826.

In addition to determining how much of the course professors would implement, they were also asked if the course was beneficial for teaching an online. Professors were asked to rank their responses on a scale of 1- 4 with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 agree. There was also an option for participants to answer, 'neither agree nor disagree.' The three 'neither agree nor disagree' responses were not calculated in the score. The mean score for the benefit of the course was 3.500 (Figure 1). No participants answered with a score of 1 or 2. The skewness for this data was symmetrical; however, at -2.267 the kurtosis was

platykurtic representing a wider bell shape. The relatively small standard deviation supports the distributional shape.

An additional question asked of the professors was if they would need to redesign their course to meet the needs of the online format. The choices were 1 – no redesign, 2 – some redesign needed, and 3 – completely redesign the course. This question gave the researcher added information as to the effectiveness of the training as professors may now realize that their traditional course cannot be simply transferred to the online format. With a mean of 2.00, it is evident that professors understand some of their course will need to be redesigned for the online format. The skewness and kurtosis are normal and slight at .000 and -.132, respectively.

The professors’ perspective regarding the effectiveness of online education does not directly relate to their impressions of the course; however, it is an appropriate assessment for those teaching an online course. On the survey, professors were asked to rank the following statement on a scale from 1 – 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree: “Online courses offer an equally effective education as their face to face counterpart”

(Stoker, Qualtrics, 2019). The mean value for the professors’ ranking was 3.286. The mean value indicates that as a group, professors have a more favorable view on the effectiveness of online education when compared to the face to

face format. Both the skewness and kurtosis were within the normal range of +/- 3 (Huck, 2004). While the scores are not a perfect bell shape curve, they are nearly an even distribution of scores. This shows that there are still individual professors who do not view online education as effective as the traditional classroom.

Inferential Statistics

An ANOVA (Figure 2) was conducted to determine if the independent variables have an effect on the dependent variable. The model revealed a statistically significant result, $F(3,17) = 3.399, p = .048$. Since $p < .05$, it can be concluded that together, the independent variables are statistically significant as predictors of a professor’s confidence post training. For this research scenario, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Figure 2: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.743	3	2.248	3.399	.048 ^b
	Residual	9.257	14	.661		
	Total	16.000	17			
a. Dependent Variable: Conf after						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Effectiveness, Years exp, Conf prior						

Figure 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.649 ^a	.421	.297	.81317	2.413
a. Predictors: (Constant), Years exp, Effectiveness, Conf prior					
b. Dependent Variable: Conf after					

When considering the effect size, together the effectiveness of online education, years of experience, and confidence prior to training can predict forty-two percent of the confidence a professor will have once they have completed the training (Figure 3). The best predictor (Figure 4) of a professor’s confidence after training is confidence before training (.608), followed by years of experience (.061), and their perspective of online education (.035).

Figure 4: Coefficients/Effect Size

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.886	1.076		.824	.424
	Conf_prior	.608	.192	.645	3.162	.007
	Effectiveness	.035	.428	.017	.082	.936
	Years_exp	.061	.394	.031	.154	.880

a. Dependent Variable: Conf after

Findings

The first research question guiding this study was on the benefit of professor training for the online. Whether you consider the raw data, inferential analysis, or descriptive statistics, it is evident that the majority of participants from this study view their professional development as valuable when transitioning from the face to face to the online format. The increase in confidence should empower professors when transitioning their face to face pedagogy to the online format.

A second research questions for this study was on professor perceptions regarding the effectiveness of online education versus the traditional face-to-face format. Nineteen percent of professors strongly agree that the online format can deliver the same quality of instruction as the face-to face-format. Fourteen percent strongly disagree. The rest of the participants responses fell in the middle. While these results may present a view that is leaning towards the more favorable view on the effectiveness of online education, it is evident that not all professors perceive the format as an equal medium.

The third research question for this study considered the factors that contribute to a professor's confidence when teaching an online course. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that the confidence of a professor before the training is the strongest predictor of the confidence they will have after the training. This is supported by the small increase in the mean between professor confidence in teaching online before the training (2.667) and after (2.700). When considering the raw data from the surveys, sixty-two percent of professors were either 'somewhat confident' or 'confident' when rating their confidence in teaching online – before to the training. Twenty-nine percent ranked themselves as 'very confident.' The numbers after the training revealed that seventy-five percent of the professors believed they were either 'somewhat more confident' or 'more confident' of their ability to teach online as a result of the training. It is evident that the training did have an impact on their confidence when teaching online, even if they had confidence going into the training. While the professors' perceptions of online education and years of experience teaching were much less of a predictor, they can still be considered a contributing factor when combined with confidence prior to the training.

Limitations of the Study

Researchers who rely on participants to give opinions and perceptions are subjected to the possibility of the said participant not giving full disclosure in their responses. This study will survey professors on their views and training about online education. While the participants' identity will be protected, it is possible that fear of retribution or loss of their position may lead professors to be guarded with their answers. The same can be said of the universities. It is possible that they will either not respond to the survey or not answer all of the questions. This could also affect the sample size. Obtaining a large sample size will ensure a worthwhile contribution to the research pool of online education.

Discussion

When considering the first research question regarding the benefit of preparing professors to teach online, the results of this study aligned with other research, "Training that instructors received in online pedagogy was also seen as beneficial because it empowered instructors to easily transfer on-ground practices into an online environment" (Spring, 2016). Properly preparing professors and courses for the online format will result in a successful online program, which will equate in student success.

The second research question for this study was to evaluate professors' perceptions on the effectiveness of online education. Previous studies revealed that professors do not agree about the effectiveness of online education (Nicoll, 2016; Spring, 2016; Stoker, 2018). The data from this study supports the idea that professors are still divided in this area.

The third research question evaluated a professor's confidence in teaching an online course. The survey analysis revealed that professors who participated in the training felt more confident about their ability to teach online. Years of experience and a professor's perception regarding the effectiveness of online education also contributes to their confidence. It would seem logical that professors who have a favorable view of online education would feel more confident about the engaging in the new medium.

Conclusion

This relatively new component of online education in colleges and universities is here to stay. If universities are going to embrace the world of online learning, they must consider all the elements of organizational change including preparing their professors for teaching online (Chancey, 2018; Nicoll, 2016, Springer 2016, Wessel, 2016). The survey given to professors at a private university in North Texas indicates that training for the online format is a worthwhile investment. With the exception of a few outliers, professors believe they benefited from the training and will use many of the components covered in the training. The positive response should encourage university administrators to require training, as well as ongoing support, for their professors who will teach an online course.

Professors, university administrators, and instructional specialist will benefit from this study as it supports the idea that professional development is necessary for a successful online course. Professors should be encouraged that training for the online format does assist with increased confidence. University administrators should consider the positive results of this study as a motivation to include training for their professors moving to the online format. Instructional specialist who assist professors with professional development should continue to train as well as provide resources to professors teaching online for sustainability. Further research could determine if all professors, courses, and students are suited for the online format. Online education is the new norm for higher education; however, that should not result in the elimination of the traditional brick and mortar classroom.

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WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: IMPLEMENTING A STANDARDIZED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT DURING CLINICAL TEACHING

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Abstract

From 2016 - 2019, candidates in Trinity University's Master of Arts in Teaching program completed the Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers (PPAT), as one requirement for successful program completion. In doing so, faculty learned important lessons about implementing performance assessment during clinical teaching. Unlike traditional measures, standardized performance assessments purport to predict teacher effectiveness while supporting the candidate and institutional learning. This can happen only if the process does not negate the product. Keys include identifying, communicating, and educating stakeholders; redefining roles; integrating coursework and clinical teaching; realigning program curriculum; scaffolding experiences for learning early and often; and supporting candidates and cooperating/mentor teachers.

Keywords: clinical teaching, standardized performance assessment, teacher effectiveness

Educator preparation programs are being held increasingly accountable for the quality of the teachers they produce. This follows a growing trend in higher education challenging assumptions around return on investment and pointing out common mismatches between graduates' knowledge and skills and employers' needs (Dusst & Winthrop, 2019). Like never before, teacher education must justify its value and relevance in an environment that has shifted the focus from inputs and processes to outcome measures (Cochrane-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013). Searching for ways to ensure that beginning teachers will be effective in the classroom and establishing evidence that formal preservice education contributes to this effectiveness is critical. As a profession, we know preparation matters, but we have struggled to provide strong evidence of program impact on teacher quality that makes a difference in student learning (Goldhaber, 2019).

Most measures of teacher effectiveness are only loosely tied to actual classroom teaching (Crowe, 2010; Mitchell, Robinson, Plake, & Knowles, 2001). In teacher education, measures of basic skills, content knowledge, and pedagogy have been used in combination with degrees and content hours to evaluate what teachers know. Such measures are often linked to definitions of teacher quality (NCLB, 2001). The problem is that while traditional assessments identify what teachers *know*, they do a poor job of measuring what they can *do* in classroom settings. Darling-Hammond (2010) points out that "highly qualified" does not equal "highly effective" when it comes to teachers and their impact on student learning. Moreover, Peck, Singer-Gabella, Sloan, and Lin (2014) argue that relying on traditional and local measures of unknown reliability and validity is in effect "driving blind," leaving programs without outcome measures to predict teacher effectiveness and guide program improvement. The development of performance assessments that evaluate candidates' readiness to teach purport to fill this gap and move the profession toward valid measures of teacher effectiveness.

Standardized teacher performance assessments, such as the Educative Teaching Performance Assessment (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity, 2013) or edTPA, and Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers (Educational Testing Service, 2016) or PPAT, require candidates to complete a series of tasks and reflections around planning, instruction,

and assessment that include unedited video of classroom teaching (Table 1). Portfolios are scored externally by trained raters. Unlike traditional assessments, such measures are concrete and contextualized, more closely representing conditions experienced during inservice teaching. Proponents suggest that performance assessments be one of multiple measures used to evaluate beginning teachers' readiness to teach (Cantrell & Kane, 2013). Data generated can create strong feedback systems, informing program improvement. Darling-Hammond (2010) suggests that "when assessments both predict teacher effectiveness and support individual and institutional learning, they can help to create an engine for stimulating greater teacher effectiveness in the system as a whole" (p. 21).

Table 1**edTPA and PPAT Task Comparison**

edTPA (Pearson)	PPAT (ETS)
Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment	Task 1: Knowledge of Students and the Learning Environment (internally scored)
Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning (includes teaching video)	Task 2: Assessment and Data Collection to Measure and Inform Student Learning
	Task 3: Designing Instruction for Student Learning
Task 3: Assessing Student Learning	Task 4: Implementing and Analyzing Instruction to Promote Student Learning (includes a teaching video)

From 2019-21, the Texas Education Agency is piloting edTPA as a possible alternative to the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities traditional licensure assessment. The move has invoked heated discussion throughout the state around questions of instrument validity, program impact, and candidate cost. To inform the conversation, this paper shares what one Texas institution has learned about implementing a standardized teacher performance assessment (PPAT), including the value and potential pitfalls of using performance assessment during clinical teaching.

Program Context

The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) at Trinity University is a post-baccalaureate program leading to initial certification in Texas. Designed as a five-year (4+1) program, the MAT utilizes a Professional Development School (PDS) model and graduates 20-25 candidates each year. As undergraduates, students complete a bachelor's degree in a content field, while taking 11-17 hours of prerequisite education courses. These include traditional

courses and field-based experiences. Students then apply to the MAT program their senior year. Once admitted, candidates are grouped into cohorts (elementary and secondary) and begin each July with six hours of coursework. In fall, candidates are paired with a master mentor teacher at an urban PDS and spend four days a week in clinical placements, with one day at the university for courses. In spring, candidates spend five days a week in clinical placements, with two evening courses at the university. Candidates participate in a full week of August inservice, as well as experiences such as out-of-state student field trips, attendance at professional conferences, and professional development related to specific PDS initiatives.

Several aspects of program design are supportive of performance-based assessment, including year-long clinical teaching, PDS partnerships, and faculty who teach graduate courses and concurrently serve as field supervisors. These conditions promote coherence and the integration of candidates' knowledge and skills across the program. Courses are

connected with one another and with culminating field experiences; similarly, faculty, PDS coordinators, and mentor teachers collaborate around curriculum and clinical teaching.

Trinity University is one of seven programs included in a recent study of high-quality teacher preparation. Therein, Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019) identified performance assessment as one of four practices that prepare candidates for deeper learning and echo research findings around effective teaching:

- A coherent vision and set of integrated experiences,
- Modeling of effective practices that provide concrete examples and tools for candidates,
- Strong clinical experiences, and
- Performance assessments. (p. 324)

In 2015, Trinity University piloted and later adopted the Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers (PPAT), an evidence-based performance assessment of beginning teachers’ readiness to teach. The move from an internal teacher work sample to an externally-evaluated measure was partially in response to new CAEP assessment requirements. We also valued the opportunity to participate at the pilot level of instrument development with Educational Testing Service (ETS). In 2016, the MAT program began requiring candidates to pass PPAT, using the nationally recommended cut score of 40. This became one of several criteria for MAT program completion. Grant funding was secured to cover the candidates’ cost of the assessment.

PPAT, developed by ETS in 2015, is similar to edTPA; however, it has two substantive differences that made it a good fit for the MAT program (Table 2). Similar to the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS), PPAT consists of one universal rubric rather than 28 subject-specific rubrics. MAT faculty are generalists rather than specialists, who work with small numbers of candidates in diverse teaching fields. In this context, the use of multiple rubrics can be challenging. Scoring along with the timing of task submissions also differs. edTPA’s three tasks are weighted equally and submitted concurrently; PPAT’s final task (Task 4) comprises 50 percent of the overall score, with tasks submitted at varying intervals. This permits candidates to receive scores on earlier tasks before submitting the final task, allowing for growth-over-time. One debate regarding teacher performance measures is whether they can be, as many suggest, both a formative tool for learning *and* a summative assessment of candidate readiness (Paugh, Wendell, Power, & Gilbert, 2017; Reagan et al, 2016). If so, the structure of PPAT may lend itself to this assumption to a greater degree than edTPA.

Table 2

edTPA and PPAT Scoring and Rubric Comparisons

	edTPA (Pearson)	PPAT (ETS)
Scoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All tasks equal weight - Rolling submission dates - All 3 tasks scored at one time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task 4 is weighted double (allows for growth) - Task-specific submission dates - Tasks 1, 2 & 3 due first with scores received before Task 4 is due (allows for feedback)
Rubrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28 content-specific handbooks/rubrics - Content-specific & general academic vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 rubric (similar to T-TESS) - General academic vocabulary
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-3 focus students in one class - 3-5 days of continuous learning - Teaching video (2 clips of up to 10 minutes each - unedited) - Authentic artifacts - planning, instruction, and assessment - Analysis of student learning for feedback and next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 focus students in one class - Tasks do not have to be from the same unit/lessons - Teaching video (1 15-minute clip or 3, 5-minute clips - unedited) - Authentic artifacts - planning, instruction, and assessment - Analysis of student learning for feedback and next steps

Implementing Performance Assessment

When shifting to any standardized performance assessment, stakeholders must be identified and brought into the implementation process. At minimum, these include district personnel, school administrators, mentor/cooperating teachers, field supervisors, university faculty, candidates, and P-12 students. All need to understand the rationale for the change and how it may impact the broader school mission and individuals' roles. It is critical to thoughtfully include stakeholders from the beginning, proactively involving them in the planning process, rather than reactively addressing questions and concerns. Although unexpected situations always occur, intentional planning and communication builds trust, prevents confusion, and minimizes stress around programmatic shifts.

Informing District and School Leadership

We began by hosting meetings with district and campus administrators to explain the rationale behind the use of performance assessment and what it would mean for the campus, teachers, students, and parents. Positively reiterating that adopting a standardized performance assessment for teacher certification more closely measures what we expect candidates to be able to do once they enter the classroom while helping to professionalize the field of teaching, was a consistent message in these meetings. While sharing research on teacher effectiveness and student achievement, we also emphasized how the PPAT process can help inservice teachers deeply examine and articulate their own practice. This opened opportunities for sharing at campus faculty meetings, advisory councils, and with campus improvement committees, inviting Q&A while soliciting feedback and suggestions around implementation. For example, discussion included initial planning to appropriately space tasks across the program, considering district and schools' scope and sequence and benchmark/testing windows, as well as setting deadlines early enough to allow for mishaps and unforeseen circumstances (e.g., video recording failures, focus student absenteeism, candidate illness). Throughout the process, we committed to developing and providing ongoing training and support for cooperating/mentor teachers and, as always, to listen to their voices regarding the impact on the candidate and P-12 students.

Before the academic year began, administrators from two districts collaborated with the university to develop an approved parent permission form for videotaping that included how materials would be collected, stored, and shared (English & Spanish). We included an optional cover letter with the permission form, cosigned by the principal and field supervisor, to provide parents with context and legitimacy for use of student data (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Sample Cover Letter for Permission Form

Date

Dear ISA Family,

The International School of the Americas has had a long-term relationship with Trinity University. Graduate students studying to be teachers complete internships in our school. Ms. TEACHER CANDIDATE is an intern working with Mr. MENTOR TEACHER, your child's mathematics teacher; she began working with ISA in August and will continue through April.

As part of the teacher education program, interns complete a project called the Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers or PPAT (<https://www.ets.org/ppa/test-takers>). PPAT requires beginning teachers to plan, teach, and assess lessons to ensure student learning. We are writing to request your permission to allow Ms. TEACHER CANDIDATE to use *anonymous student work samples* from her internship for the PPAT project. This will include analysis of one video clip of teaching and student work samples. *All names and other identifying information will be removed from the work samples.*

Please complete and return the attached permission form by October 1 to Ms. TEACHER CANDIDATE and Mr. MENTOR TEACHER. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Sincerely,

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
 Principal
 email

UNIVERSITY FIELD SUPERVISOR
 Professor, Trinity University
 email

Training of Cooperating/Mentor Teachers

Perhaps the most important factor when implementing performance assessment is the quality of the clinical teaching or internship experience. Unlike traditional measures of assessment, performance assessments are

completed in context during clinical teaching, shifting the role of the cooperating/mentor teacher (C/MT). C/MTs must not only understand the assessment instrument but also consistently model best practices around the cycle of planning, instruction, and assessment. This cannot be overemphasized. C/MTs are not able to support what that they themselves do not espouse and practice.

The MAT program dedicates considerable time to identifying quality mentor teachers and providing training and support around myriad aspects of teacher development, such as dispositions, coaching skills, instructional practices, curriculum development, and PPAT. In so doing, we developed a handout for C/MTs that specified the objectives, timeline, and the role of the candidate and C/MT for each task (Appendix A).

It is important that C/MTs understand their role is one of *support and scaffolding*, not task completion. Many examples distinguishing between acceptable and excessive support can be explored in early trainings. We held feedback meetings with C/MTs regularly. These meetings are the perfect opportunity to emphasize that, more than ever, C/MTs are co-teacher educators with university faculty in the process of educator preparation. With trained and supported C/MTs on board, who are knowledgeable about the requirements, the process, and available for the candidate, the probability of successful demonstration of practice via the performance assessment increases (Kissau, Hart, & Algozzine, 2019).

The potential exists for deeper learning on the part of all involved. One mentor teacher reflected:

The most helpful part of the PPAT was the deep analysis of the students in the class being used for the PPAT process, as well as discussions about the school environment and culture and how that might impact learning. I also felt it was

helpful to assist and observe my intern through the process of designing, analyzing, and reflecting on data from an assessment.

Another mentor teacher shared:

The most helpful part of PPAT was helping the interns think explicitly through their lessons. The PPAT requires novices to choose a few focus students to accommodate for, and articulating accommodations I give particular students, as well as brainstorming accommodations with interns helped bring clarity for me to what we do as teachers each day.

That said, there were challenges along the way. One mentor stated:

A few of the logistics were challenging as a mentor. For example, helping the intern video tape, making sure not to be in the video at all or help the students during that time (when they often come up to you anyway). It was also challenging to make sure that we were keeping on schedule with each of the tasks of the PPAT. We made sure to meet weekly to look at what was coming up for PPAT as well as our classroom instruction for students. We wanted to make sure that PPAT didn't interfere, and with advance planning it didn't, but I can see this being difficult, and it definitely took some time.

Another shared “the most difficult aspect of PPAT has been helping my intern to manage his time and stress level around PPAT assignment due dates. Other than that, I think interns have always learned a lot by completing the process”. This final statement lends support for implementing micro-assignments that mirror the process early and often so candidates are not only familiar with the expectations but have worked through the cycle with the C/MT prior to submitting an externally scored lesson. C/MTs faced issues as well. For example, it became evident that not all C/MTs utilized pre-assessments. It may be that they were not accustomed to the practice, but we also found that, since they often had a solid feel for what students know or do not know, they felt this step could be skipped. Still, it was important to work with C/MTs to ensure space and time was created in the teaching process for pre-assessments (baseline data). Additionally, once post-assessment data were collected to demonstrate mastery of objectives, candidates needed designated time to re-teach, ensuring all students reached mastery. Given existing scope and sequences for various districts, we found some placements did not allow the full process to take place. A strong understanding of what the performance assessment required as well as what that meant for classroom pacing and implementation supported successful completion of the performance assessment.

New Responsibilities for Field Supervisors

Since standardized performance assessments are embedded in clinical teaching, the model designates the field supervisor (FS) as the key point person, ensuring consistency of information and scheduling across stakeholder groups. Moving from traditional to performance assessments may, therefore, require changes in the role of FSs.

Shifting from an internal assessment of candidates' work to include a consequential, external assessment required in-depth training in the standardized performance assessment instrument (i.e., PPAT). This included workshops provided by ETS to learn rubrics, figure out timelines, and identify common candidate issues, such as responding to all parts of a prompt, understanding differences in verbs such as *describe*, *explain*, *justify*, and writing responses for the intended audience (external reviewers rather than faculty or peers knowledgeable about context and program). Some FSs became scorers for PPAT to better grasp the process and expectations. Training at the institutional level was also necessary to define how the assessment would be integrated into programmatic requirements. For example, identifying and teaching acceptable feedback was an area that required discussion and consistency across programs. There is a fine line between scaffolding and support versus editing and specific feedback (i.e., “this is unclear” vs “you need to say ‘critical thinking’ not ‘learned’ in this paragraph). Our method of feedback ultimately resulted in one of three categories: Complete, Complete with Concerns, Not Complete. Note that while FS/faculty are not allowed to critique or edit candidate work, peer feedback is not restricted and can be a rich, often untapped source of learning.

In the MAT program, faculty and PDS coordinators concurrently co-teach courses and serve as FSs. In fall when candidates teach four days a week, PPAT instruction and support largely takes place during the one day (six-hour block) of coursework at the university. In spring, candidates teach five days a week and take a two-hour evening seminar for dedicated time with program faculty. Still, we have learned that candidates need additional protected writing time to successfully complete performance assessment work. What we refer to as “writing time” includes compiling, analyzing, and reflecting on one's work, in addition to creating written responses for PPAT prompts. To do so, we take candidates out of their field placement for a full

day just before each task is due (e.g., Friday writing day for a Monday task due date). In the morning, candidates spend 3-4 hours “writing” with faculty and PDS coordinators available for just-in-time support. After lunch, candidates are grouped into peer feedback groups, where they read and critique one another's work using protocols. For FSs whose role involves primarily

observation, an instructional component may be needed. For example, FSs may work with a small cohort of candidates in the field while concurrently teaching them a seminar course, where instruction, writing, and feedback on the performance assessment tasks can take place.

Somewhat unexpectedly, FSs found themselves tasked with technology support. This included providing hardware such as recording devices (i.e., iPADS, video cameras), ensuring these were returned and charged, and training individuals to video lessons in order to capture the most relevant content, while ensuring students without permission were not recorded. This took more time than expected yet was key to successful task completion.

The consequential nature of standardized performance assessment also thrust FSs in the role of quasi-testing coordinator, with the need to understand testing timelines, their impact on candidates' recommendation for certification, and district hiring schedules and requirements. For example, standardized performance assessments need to be completed, submitted, and scored early enough to allow those not passing time to resubmit and receive results before recommendation for certification, graduation, and job fairs; at the same time, candidates needed sufficient time in clinical placements to understand the context and develop relationships with C/MTs and students before beginning work on performance assessments. The two-semester clinical teaching provided sufficient options; however, negotiating this dance while keeping the needs of various stakeholders in mind can be complex.

Helping Faculty Realign Program Curriculum

Adopting a consequential performance assessment provides both the charge and the opportunity for faculty to reexamine and realign program curriculum. This includes intentionally connecting coursework and clinical practice. Research suggests that candidates are more successful on culminating performance assessments when there is opportunity to practice similar tasks throughout the duration of the teacher preparation coursework (Hildebrandt & Swanson, 2016; Kissau & Algozzine, 2017). We approached this need through a full program curriculum audit and asked ourselves the following questions:

- Where are candidates already getting the content within each task?
- Where are the gaps? Where is there overlap?
- What academic language are we using - where and why?
- How can tasks be scaffolded into the authentic work of teaching?

These questions, along with the use of varied additional resources (see Appendix B) led to a more efficient and integrated program. It is at this point where intentional and meaningful scaffolding began to take place. We identified where to systematically employ academic vocabulary (i.e., baseline data = pre-assessment, defining the difference between an approach and a strategy). Then, elements of the performance assessment were strategically woven into early courses and field experiences.

Microteaching assignments were developed to mirror smaller segments of each task in prerequisite coursework prior to the actual performance assessment. For example, we created assignments in summer courses that set the foundation for candidates to build proficiency with planning, data analysis, videotaping, teaching analysis, feedback protocols, and written reflections in a low-stakes, repetitive context. This practice, built familiarity with the process, common language, and structure of the performance assessment.

One early assignment was School and Community Exploration (Table 3). While learning about the community, school, and students, candidates simultaneously built excitement and knowledge about their upcoming placement by gathering contextual information. Purposeful scaffolding and integration created confidence once faculty introduced the performance assessment and candidates realized they already had much of the information needed to complete the first PPAT task.

Table 3

School and Community Exploration

<p><i>Community:</i> Five miles in all directions around the school <i>District:</i> (see online information) <i>School:</i> Name and address</p> <p>To complete this project, you may expansively sketch/draw, map, take pictures, talk to people, take notes, and research online. We encourage you to eat lunch in a local restaurant and/or talk to people in a restaurant working or eating there. Pay attention to what you see from the city bus, talk to the driver and others on the bus about the community. Ask questions such as - How would you describe this community? What do you know about the district? What is your impression of “x” school? What are the strengths? Areas for improvement?</p>	
<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● urban/suburban/rural ● socioeconomic information ● census data ● historical aspects <p>(Later for your individual entry, you will select one factor to connect to an instructional strategy and learning activity)</p>	
<p>District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● enrollment ● percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch ● graduation rates ● ethnicities ● percent of students with IEPs ● percent of students who are ELLs; ● per-pupil expenditures <p>State School Report Card Data http://tea.texas.gov</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hover over “Reports/Data” at top of page - Under “School Performance” click on “Texas Academic Reports” - Click on most recent TAPR - Select “District” for district data 	
<p>School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● enrollment ● percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch ● AYP data ● ethnicities ● percent of students with IEPs ● percent of students who are ELLs ● teacher-to-student ratio ● average years of teaching for faculty <p>State School Report Card Data http://tea.texas.gov</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hover over “Reports/Data” at top of page - Under “School Performance” click on “Texas Academic Reports” - Click on most recent TAPR - Select “Campus” for school data 	

As with all assignments that are the culmination of multiple, smaller parts, it is beneficial for the learner to tease apart the major elements. One way we supported candidates in the process of writing PPAT responses was to create fillable formats that broke down the prompts and elements into the individual skills evaluated in the scoring rubrics. Some candidates struggled with reflective writing skills, and this alone can result in difficulties crafting narratives necessary for successful completion. Alternately, candidates may craft knowledgeable and descriptive responses that truly capture the spirit of the prompt, but if certain parts are excluded (overlooked), the resulting score can be substantially lower than needed to demonstrate mastery. Research suggests the use of more explicit reflective writing practice to support those candidates with less developed writing skills (Troyan & Kaplan, 2015). We found this helpful for those who were good writers but became bogged down in the quantity of the material being addressed. One candidate stated:

The most difficult aspect of the PPAT was the redundancy and general format. I felt as though the questions could get repetitive, and I would lose motivation to write answers because either the previous questions or the previous tasks asked the same thing. The PPAT prompts were not necessarily extremely difficult, but the whole system could get overwhelming.

Scaffolded response structures helped ensure that all elements were addressed carefully, individual segments were not overlooked, and candidates paid close attention to the large number of details required in the narratives.

The process of change took time, compromise, and a willingness to grow. One faculty summed it up:

The process forced us to examine what we were doing and why. We had to let go of some things we were doing to make space for PPAT and make some difficult choices. There were definitely trade-offs, but in the end, it brought us together as a team with common goals around what we want our candidates to walk away with.

Promoting Candidate Buy-In

The main factor we discovered in getting candidate buy-in and minimizing resistance was to establish relevance. Candidates' main questions were - Why do I have to do this? How will I have time to complete this assignment and still learn to teach? Being transparent about the deliberate integration of the performance assessment, while promoting *teaching as intellectual work* (Darling-Hammond, 2000), was not a new approach, but we found the need to be explicit about Planning-Instruction-Assessment as an ongoing, circular process that requires thoughtful reflection, revision, tools, and repeated practice. In other words, the performance assessment and learning to teach are one and the same. Pointing out best practice's candidates had learned previously as we came to each PPAT task helped build this understanding and belief. One candidate stated:

The most helpful aspect of the PPAT was Task 4, where we were required to film an entire lesson for submission. I have used this video multiple times for reflection, mastery entries, and job applications. I plan on adding portions to my employment portfolio, so prospective employers can see me in action.

Another shared:

The PPAT helped me plan a purposeful assessment cycle and measure the data, and this was probably the most helpful aspect. I learned how to better align my pre-, formative, and post assessments and then use the data meaningfully.

One music candidate summed up the benefits of using performance assessment with large numbers of students:

The most helpful thing about PPAT to me was the ability to get to really know my students in my target PPAT class and thus shape my teaching style towards their particular growth. We need to be able to do this with all our students, but given I was teaching elementary music in a school with around 630 students total (the numbers of which would fluctuate consistently during my time at my elementary placement), it was a challenge to be able to effectively teach and differentiate for all the students at the same time. At the heart of PPAT, there was an urge to first know your students in your particular class (e.g., sending out a student survey and then analyzing the results in Task 1) and then specifically plan for the class in following lessons and assessments (which included differentiation with the two focus students in Tasks 2-4). Starting with my chosen 3rd-grade music classroom, this provided me with an opportunity to really know the intricacies of teaching and beginning to understand your students. So in a general sense, PPAT helped give me a basic starting point in that fundamental.

There was a deliberate focus on helping candidates connect the relevance of the performance assessment with their graduate school work as well as their practical teaching experience. Integration and scaffolding were key to candidate buy-in and their successful completion of the earlier tasks set up confidence and proficiency for the last, more heavily weighted task. Recognizing that the PPAT work was a formative assessment of their individual learning helped build their commitment for a thorough summative assessment representing their readiness for teaching. As the feedback indicates, once they trusted there would be support for the nuts and bolts (i.e., technology troubleshooting, response structures, time management) candidates were receptive to accepting that this process would be beneficial to developing aspects of their teaching practice.

Lessons Learned

As our integration of PPAT strengthened with practice, and we sought feedback from stakeholders, we learned several threads of successful implementation which pulled through the stakeholder groups and needs:

1. *Time management topped the list* - This factor impacts every stakeholder and their role in the assessment process. It was necessary to scaffold tasks, tease apart all requirements, and set deadlines early enough to allow for unforeseen circumstances. Creating checklists for each task, while creating writing time was key.
2. *Knowledge of the performance assessment, specifically the scoring rubrics, is critical*. All stakeholders need to know the process of the assessment (videos are made, permission forms are completed, etc.). Many stakeholders need to share a clear understanding of specific terms and academic language. Candidates needed to respond to all parts of a prompt and writing responses for the correct audience. Those working with candidates needed to know these instrument specifics to support candidate success.
3. *Back-up plans are a must*. Life happens, and there must always be a Plan B (e.g., record more video than necessary).
4. *The devil is in the details*. Unexpectedly, different writing platforms provided different character counts causing frustration (Google Drive vs PPAT online system). Being able to note the differences upfront saved frustration later. Providing recording devices across PDS campuses that were available, charged, had room for storage, and were working properly required thought and troubleshooting, but ultimately allowed for ease of access and use. Adequate digital storage space became complicated at times. Little details like having candidates create a seating chart with codes for students without video permission worked wonders. Identifying these small details and creating realistic and concrete processes relieved stress related to the process.
5. *Identifying and teaching acceptable faculty and field supervisor feedback was an area that required discussion and consistency across programs*. All stakeholders needed to be on the same page regarding the differences between scaffolding and support versus editing and specific feedback.

Conclusion

Implementing a standardized performance assessment provided opportunities for learning within and across programs and organizations (Peck, Singer-Gabella, Sloan, & Lin, 2014). To be sure, the initial year of change is challenging, as adjustments to process, timelines, and curriculum encroach on an already full schedule. There was the need for flexibility and collaboration as stakeholders evaluated how the new assessment would fit into the program meaningfully. We took on the challenge to carefully integrate the necessary tasks into the practical experience in a way that would still create formative learning opportunities for candidates. The shift to the performance assessment needed to be a value add, not simply additional work. Statements from teachers, faculty,

and candidates indicate the work on the PPAT was, indeed, a formative learning tool that allowed candidates to evaluate their practice and make improvements. The process required to complete the assessment was beneficial beyond achieving a rubric score to complete the program, but added reflective and intellectual work as candidates evaluated and took steps to increase the effectiveness of their teaching.

At Trinity, we realize that our context is unique and our insights will not transfer to every teacher preparation program; however, we see value in the prospect of defining better measures for predicting teacher effectiveness and improving the quality of teachers for all of our children. As we move from implementing the PPAT in our Teacher Education Program, we will pay close attention to the lessons learned and the resulting processes as we begin to pilot the edTPA with our next cohort.

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Appendix A

PPAT Overview for Cooperating/Mentor Teachers

Task	Description	Candidate Turns In	Mentor Support	Due Date
TASK 1: KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Interns identify contextual information about the school community, district, campus, classroom & specific students. They then use that information to identify possible instructional strategies and learning activities that will support students' learning.	A written commentary (approx. 7 pages), the Instructional and Support Resources Chart, one completed student interest inventory, and a document that demonstrates a method of communication with students and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - help secure permission forms - - help interns access & review student data, including mainframe, Compass, Gradespeed, special education, ELL, & cumulative folders - help interns identify one specific class to focus on for the PPAT 	September 21
TASK 2: ASSESSMENT & DATA COLLECTION TO MEASURE & INFORM STUDENT LEARNING	<p>1. Interns select or design an assessment from a lesson they plan and teach.</p> <p>2. Interns must identify data used to establish a baseline for student growth related to the lesson's learning goals. After administering the assessment, interns must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create a graphic representation of the results for the class - analyze the results to determine students' progress toward the learning goals - evaluate the effectiveness of the data-collection process - describe how students were involved in analyzing their own assessment results OR helped to understand their progress toward the learning goals - determine the effectiveness of the modifications that they made to the assessments for their two focus students - explain how their data analysis will inform their future instruction - explain how they would modify the assessment and/or data-collection process for the future 	A written commentary (approx. 7 pages) and 8 artifacts (2 representative pages of the assessment (max), 2 pages of the whole class baseline data (max), 1 page of the rubric/scoring guide, 1 page of the baseline data for Student 1, 1 page of the baseline data for Student 2, 2 pages of a graphic representation of the collected data (max), 1 page of a completed assessment for Student 1, 1 page of a completed assessment for Student 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -discuss and mutually agree on the two focus students (ensuring parent consent and students' attendance) - help your intern identify lesson content within your scope and sequence that s/he can utilize for the task. - discuss the types of assessments that are appropriate for the content that can be quantitatively scored but allow the intern to create the assessment (e.g., 10-item multiple choice) - review and approve the assessment for use with your students - review and approve a pre-assessment created by your intern - support intern in a think-aloud discussion about how to analyze the assessment results after teaching the lesson (intern should do the talking with mentor asking only facilitating questions) 	November 2
TASK 3: DESIGN INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENT LEARNING	Interns design a lesson that addresses the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the learning theory/method used to guide their planning - learning goals (and explanation of how they build on content students have previously learned) - potential difficulties students might encounter and how to address them 	A written commentary (approx. 8 pages), 2 representative pages of a lesson plan that includes the use of technology (max), 1 representative page of a differentiated lesson plan for Student 1, 1 representative page of a differentiated lesson plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practice using the video technology selected on a different class to make sure everything is working correctly - help your intern identify lesson content within your scope and sequence that s/he can utilize for the task. 	January 30

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - instructional strategies to be used to engage students (that connect to the learning goals) - how to group students (e.g. individual, small group, whole group) to facilitate learning - learning activities to implement and 1) how they address students strengths/needs; and 2) how class demographics informed design of learning activities - how to foster both teacher-to-student <i>and</i> student-to-student interactions - materials/resources used - technology used <p>In addition to designing the whole class lesson, interns must select 2 focus students with <i>different</i> learning needs. For each student, the intern must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe the child’s learning strengths and challenges related to the lesson’s learning goals - describe how they will differentiate specific parts of the lesson to help the child meet the goals - determine what evidence to collect to show progress the student makes toward the goals <p>After teaching the lesson, interns must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - determine to what extent the lesson facilitated student learning (citing specific evidence collected) - analyze how students demonstrated meaningful learning of the content - describe adjustments made during the lesson to better support student engagement/learning - analyze steps taken while teaching to foster teacher-to-student <i>and</i> student-to-student interactions - describe the feedback provided during the lesson to facilitate student learning and determine its impact on student learning - determine whether/how the two focus students achieved the learning goals - evaluate whether/how differentiation of the lesson helped the focus students meet the lesson goals - describe a detailed plan to work with the students who did not 	<p>for Student 2, work sample for any class member other than St. 1 or 2 (1 page), work sample from Student 1 (1 page), work sample for student 2 (1 page)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support the intern in lesson plan development and differentiation but allow the intern to create the plan - review and approve the lesson plan 	
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	<p>meet the learning goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe how the analysis of the lesson will guide future planning (both for the whole class and the two focus students) 			
<p>TASK 4: IMPLEMENT & ANALYZE INSTRUCTION TO PROMOTE STUDENT LEARNING</p>	<p>Interns design a standards-based, whole class lesson that addresses learning needs, includes instructional strategies to engage students, and incorporates assessment techniques to gauge student learning.</p> <p>While planning the lesson, interns must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify learning goal(s) and standards (both state and national) and explain how the goals are appropriate for the lesson and students' learning needs. - identify whole-class data used to establish a baseline to measure student growth - describe how students' prior knowledge and background information influence their planning process - determine how to use academic content language to advance the understanding of the concept being taught - determine how to engage students in critical thinking to promote student learning - determine how to use questioning skills to promote student learning - integrate reading into the content they will teach - describe the activity or activities that is(are) the main focus of the lesson plan (including how they anticipate and address student learning needs) - describe how to monitor student learning during the lesson - determine the work samples students will submit as part of your assessment of their learning (work can be created either during or after the lesson). Determine how these responses will be integrated into the lesson plan <p>When designing the lesson, interns select two focus students who reflect different learning needs. They must address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what are his/her learning strengths/challenges? - what data will you use to 	<p>A written commentary (approx. 8 pages), 2 representative pages of a lesson plan, 1 representative page of a differentiated lesson plan for Student 1, 1 representative page of a differentiated lesson plan for Student 2, work sample for any class member other than St. 1 or 2 (1 page), work sample from Student 1 (1 page), work sample for student 2 (1 page)</p> <p>Interns can either upload one 15-minute unedited video segment or three 5-minute segments (each unedited).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - videotape the lesson - observe the lesson and provide feedback - ask probing questions to help interns think about academic language, questioning, critical thinking, and reading skills (but do not identify for them) 	<p>March 10</p>

	<p>establish a baseline to measure the student's growth? - what evidence will you collect to show his/her progress toward the learning goals? [interns must collect this data and reference it in later analysis]</p> <p>The lesson must then be videotaped. Afterwards, interns use the video to reflect on the lesson: - how did the academic language you used advance students' understanding of the concept being taught? - how did you engage students in critical thinking to promote student learning? - how did you use questioning skills to promote student learning? - how did you integrate reading into the content you taught? - how did you monitor student learning while teaching the lesson? - how did you provide feedback to individual and the whole class to advance student learning? - how did you use verbal and nonverbal communication techniques to foster student learning? - what classroom management strategies did you use during the lesson? - in what ways did the strategies engage students and promote a positive learning environment? - in terms of instructional strategies, interactions with students, and classroom management strategies, what went well and what areas would you revise in the future? - what revisions would you make if you were to teach this lesson again?</p> <p>Then interns assess student learning: - to what extent did students reach the learning goals? - based on the baseline data and student work samples, to what extent did each of the two focus students achieve the learning goals? - how will your analysis of the baseline data and student work samples guide planning for future lessons?</p>			
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Appendix B**Teaching Resources**

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DREAMING BIG: A CASE STUDY OF FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCES OF THREE FEMALE UNDOCUMENTED UNDERGRADUATES IN TEXAS

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Abstract

Undocumented students experience college academic life differently as compared to their citizen peers. Students' legal status is a lens that informs academic-related emotions, decisions, and interactions with faculty and peers. This paper examines emergent themes from a case study with three undocumented undergraduate Latina students – Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne – at an urban 4-year university in Texas and illuminates the realities of these undocumented students. Themes included anxiety beyond “normal” school-related stress, uncertainty, frustration, hope, and determination. Survey results revealed that, on average, narrators experienced decreases in positive emotions and increases in negative emotions related to academics.

Keywords: undocumented students, narrators, first-year experience

It is both a frightening and challenging time to be an undocumented college student in the United States. In a recent online article for *The Quad*, Tomar (January 2019) explained that “the rising cultures of fear, prejudice, and scapegoating have translated into policy initiatives that [have had] a very real, tangible, and negative impact on [undocumented] immigrant communities.” Policy discussions regarding undocumented immigrants at the federal level typically receive more attention from the media. However, “a great majority of policies determining the treatment of undocumented students in college settings are made at the state, higher education system, and institution levels” (Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2015, p. 1). These policies govern everything from access to financial aid, whether undocumented immigrants pay in-state tuition, and whether they can even enroll in individual institutions in certain states.

The reality of undocumented college students' first-year experience differs from their citizen peers. These differences include, but are not limited to, adaptation and integration into college culture, understanding and use of academic language, lack of familial experience and support, and uncertainty (Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013; Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010; Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009; Teranishi et al., 2015). Undocumented students' legal status is a lens through which they view positive and negative academic experiences in their coursework and interactions with faculty and peers. Given the policy, academic, as well as social, emotional, and psychological contexts, it is necessary to have a broader understanding and discussion on, for, and with undocumented undergraduates.

Review of Literature

Data on undocumented students reveals that while the majority are Latinx, they represent nearly every major racial group, including Black, White, and Asian American and Pacific Islander, as well as a number of different ethnic sub-groups (Office of Immigrant Statistics, December, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2015; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2018). Among Latinx immigrants, the most significant representation of undocumented immigrants originated from Mexico, followed by countries in Central America, specifically Peru, Colombia, Guatemala, and El Salvador. “Undocumented college students represent a range of immigration histories. While the average age upon arrival for respondents in our sample was 6.6 years, there was a wide distribution in the age of arrivals.

Generally speaking, research with undocumented Latinx students pales in comparison to their citizen peers

(Bjorklund, 2018; Conger & Chellman, 2013; Katsiaticas, Volpe, Raza, & Garcia, 2017). The lack of research is partly because data collection with undocumented students can be challenging given their legal status and fears about revealing it (Gonzales et al., 2013; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). This case study with undocumented undergraduates emerged as part of a broader longitudinal project (Allaire, In Press) on professional identity development, salience, and maintenance with undergraduate students at an urban four-year university in Texas. This article explores the realities of three narrators who are undocumented immigrant college students gleaned through interviews. The themes presented emerged through a narrative and cross-case analysis of the narrators' individual experiences.

DACA and the DREAM Act

Exact numbers of college-aged undocumented immigrants are, understandably, difficult to obtain. The Migration Policy Institute (2019) estimates that there are 3.2 million undocumented children and young adults under the age of 24 within the United States. Currently, Texas ranks second behind California in both total and college-aged undocumented immigrant population (Migration Policy Institute, 2019; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Both the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) have attempted to address the needs of undocumented young adults brought to the United States as children.

The DREAM Act is federal legislation first introduced in 2001 to give specific undocumented immigrants a path to citizenship in the United States. Several versions of the DREAM Act have been introduced in Congress, but despite bipartisan support, none have passed. The 2017 Senate version of the DREAM Act would have created a three-step pathway – conditional permanent residence, lawful permanent residence, and naturalization – to citizenship for current, former, and future undocumented high school graduates through college, work, or military service. The Center for Migration Studies (2019), Migration Policy Institute (2019), and the Pew Research Center (2018) estimate that 3.4 million individuals would qualify under the 2017 version of the DREAM Act, and over 1.5 million would eventually obtain a green card.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) provided temporary protection and relief from deportation as well as work authorization for specific undocumented individuals who were brought to the United States as children (Immigration Policy Center, 2012; Teranishi et al., 2015). It allowed an estimated 800,000 eligible young adults to work, attend school, and plan their lives without the constant threat of deportation (Center for Migration Studies, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Similar to the DREAM Act, there are specific criteria that undocumented individuals must meet to qualify for DACA status. However, DACA does not provide permanent legal status to individuals and must be renewed every two years. In 2017, Acting Secretary of State Elaine Duke rescinded the 2012 DACA memorandum and announced a “winding down” of DACA. Legal challenges at the state and federal level have delayed the process of ending DACA and have left past and current recipients uncertain of their futures (Migration Policy Institute, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2018; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2018).

Despite the benefits of DACA, a study with over 900 undocumented undergraduates from 55 countries living in 34 states by Teranishi et al. (2015) revealed that the social, emotional, psychological, educational, and economic impacts on undocumented undergraduates caused by the uncertainty surrounding the DREAM Act and DACA are genuine. In their study comparing siblings who differ in their legal status, Liscow and Woolston (2016) found that undocumented teenagers with 2.6% more likely to be out of school and make almost \$8,500 less than their citizen siblings. In their qualitative study with eight DACA recipients from Mexico, Benuto, Casas, Cummings, and Newlands (2018) found that as participants grew up, they experienced a sense of non-belonging. When they received DACA status, these feelings temporarily subsided and then returned when they encountered the limitations of DACA. In their analysis of undocumented immigrants in California, Washington, New York, and Massachusetts, Gonzales et al. (2013) found that undocumented immigrant children experience high levels of distorted identity formation, have a higher risk of specific mental health issues, miss milestones, and often feel isolated and constricted. Further, Casas, Benuto, and Newlands (2019) found these feelings of non-belonging to be exasperated by the current anti-immigrant political climate.

Going to College

College is already stressful. The academic stresses of higher education, however, are magnified for undocumented students and can include additionally psychological, physiological, and behavioral stress due to their immigration status. The number of college students who are the first in their families to attend college/university is growing, as post-secondary degrees have become a prerequisite for employment (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; Shapiro et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education,

2018). Scholarship, such as Benuto et al. (2018), Cadenas, Bernstein, and Tracey (2018), Pérez et al. (2010), and Teranishi et al. (2015) comprehensive report entitled *In the Shadows of the Ivory Tower* have revealed and contextualized how undocumented students' college experiences are unique and differ from those of their citizen peers. For example, in his study with DACA recipients in Ohio, Macías (2018) explored particularly financial exclusions and highlighted undergraduate immigrants' and immigrant communities practice "gridin'," "hustlin'," and "schemin'," to navigate barriers and pay for college.

A U.S. Department of Education Report (2017) entitled *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* 2017 noted that 3.0 million of the 17.3 million undergraduate students in fall 2014 were Hispanic, which represents a 119% increase from ten years prior (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; Shapiro et al., 2017). However, only 5-10% of the 1.3 million college-aged undocumented immigrants, approximately 13% of the roughly 12.0 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, pursue higher education (Center for Migration Studies, 2019; Migration Policy Institute, 2019; Office of Immigration Statistics, December 2018; Pew Research Center, 2018).

Undocumented College Students

The Pew Research Center (2018) estimates between 200,000 to 250,000 undocumented students, about two percent of all students, are enrolled in colleges nationwide. As noted previously, there is a growing body of literature describing the experiences and realities of undocumented college students. "The state of our knowledge, however, is rather nascent" (Gonzales et al., 2013, p. 17). Benuto et al. (2018), Bjorklund (2018), Conger and Chellman (2013), Ellis and Chen (2013), and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011), in particular, have created strong foundations and offer comprehensive surveys of emergent themes among undocumented college students through reviews of literature, analysis of state tuition rates, and qualitative research.

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) for example notes that despite the diversity of undocumented undergraduates' origins, "the majority face three classic challenges: they are typically the first in their families to go to college, most live in mixed-status families, and many report stress, anxiety, and depression" (p. 429). In their study, Gonzales et al. (2013) emphasize that "given the identity threats and constant exposure to stress...undocumented youngsters are vulnerable to poor mental health outcomes" (p. 18). Additionally, Contreras (2009) and Perez et al. (2010) describe undocumented undergraduates' limited access to financial aid, their struggle to manage multiple jobs to pay for their college education, and how immigrant students work to contribute to their family's income. However, research by Casas et al. (2019) indicated that the challenging educational journeys of DACA undergraduates were often mitigated by perseverance, strength, and motivation.

Themes gleaned through a narrative analysis of Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne's interviews align with those described by the previously cited scholarship. This study adds to the conversation about the experiences of undocumented youth and undergraduates with a specific focus on the narrators' first-year experiences at an urban university in Texas.

Method

The overarching purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of journey undergraduates take in the development, maintenance, and salience of their professional identities during their time at a four-year university. The overarching research question was: *What are the experiences of undergraduate students at a four-year university?* A semi-structured interview protocol was developed to answer this question. During first-year interviews, both related and unrelated themes began to emerge. This paper explores some of the themes related directly to the undocumented narrators in this project.

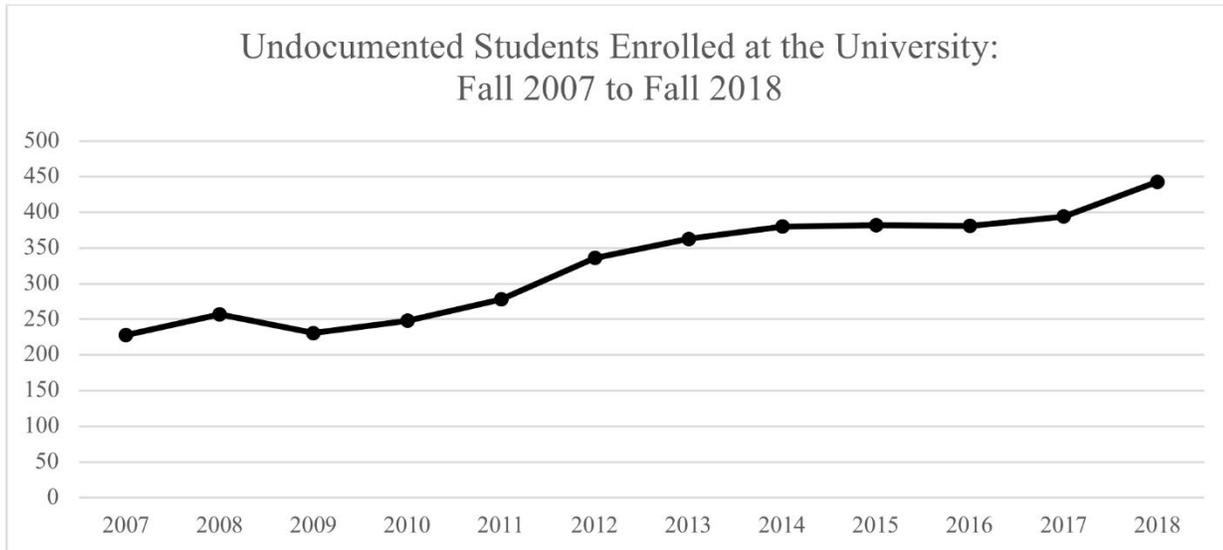
Therefore, the broad research question has been refined to reflect the first-year experiences of the undocumented immigrant students who were purposefully selected to participate. The more specific research question was: *What are the first-year experiences of undocumented students at a four-year university?* While more explicit, this question still casts a wide net and allows for multiple data types and the exploration of academic as well as social and emotional experiences during students' first-year. As a result, this study took a pragmatic approach towards data collection and recognized the value of the individual, as well as collective, voice, and narrative. Additionally, the emergent themes illuminate the emotional experiences of a distinct minority of undergraduates at the university level.

The University of Houston-Downtown

The University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) is an urban, four-year, Hispanic-serving institution in Texas with over 14,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Approximately 40% (1,091) of all undergraduates self-identify as Hispanic or Latinx, and over 65% of Hispanic undergraduates were female. Hispanic females are also the student demographic with the

highest graduate rate (23%). Additionally, according to UHD student statistics (see Figure 1), the number of students who self-identified as undocumented has increased steadily from 228 (2.0% of the total undergraduate population) in Fall 2007 to 443 (3.5%) in Fall 2018 (Data USA, 2016; University, 2017).

Figure 1



Undocumented student enrollment at the University from 2007 to 2018.

The Narrators

This case study involved three (n=3) undergraduate students who, at the time of the collection of this data, were enrolled at the UHD as freshmen. The narrators were purposefully selected to participate in a more comprehensive longitudinal study on the development and maintenance of professional teacher identity because all self-identified their interest in pursuing degrees and careers in teaching (Allaire, In Press). Narrators in the broader study were purposefully selected based on several self-identifying factors. These included being the first in their family to attend college, the first time in college (FTIC), ethnicity, and the certification area (e.g., early childhood through sixth grade, fourth through eighth grade) in which they expressed interest. In addition to the factors mentioned previously, Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne (pseudonyms) self-identified as undocumented immigrants from Mexico at the time of selection (See Table 1). Per the UHD’s Institutional Review Board, narrators were made aware of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time.

Table 1

Narrator Biographical Information

Narrator	Age	Ethnicity	Immigrant	DACA Recipient	FTIC	1 st Generation College Student	Low-Income Student
Cynthia	18	Hispanic/Latinx	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Emma	18	Hispanic/Latinx	✓		✓		✓
Ivonne	20	Hispanic/Latinx	✓	✓		✓	

Biographical information of the three narrators – Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne.

Data Collection

All of the undergraduate narrators were interviewed once per semester – Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 - during their first academic year at the University. Individual interviews lasted for approximately 60 minutes and consisted of both a semi-structured interview protocol which allowed for both consistencies across narrators and flexibility to address narrator-specific topics. Interviewing both semesters allowed the interviewer to structure Spring 2018 interviews in such a way that they were built on information provided during in Fall 2017.

Qualitative data were gathered through individual interviews with themes generated through narrative case study analysis in conjunction with a grounded theory framework (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The narrative approach to the participants' oral histories recognized "the self-reflective nature of qualitative research...and emphasize[d] the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represent[ed] information" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 86). This role was accomplished through flexible guidelines, a focus on learning from the networks, situations, relationships, views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, ideologies, and opportunities embedded within the participants' experiences (Holton, 2010; Yin, 2014).

The Fall 2017 interviews focused on the narrators' personal and academic backgrounds with the inclusion of questions and prompts such as "describe a memorable experience (positive or negative) in school" and to describe the experience of applying to college and feeling of being accepted. Spring 2018 interviews built on the previous interviews and asked narrators to reflect on their experiences and explored feelings of "becoming" as they finished their first year in college. The case study design of this project enabled the personal reflections gathered from the narrators' oral histories to be analyzed both individually and collectively.

Data Analysis

All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and shared with individual narrators for editing. Transcripts were then coded for themes linking the narrators. Themes emerged from the data through several levels of coding – initial/open, focused, and axial/thematic – with extensive use of memoing throughout the process. Initial coding was based on a variety of literal, figurative, and contextual material provided by each of the narrators. Coding included word-by-word, line-by-line, incident-by-incident, and in vivo coding methods (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010; Charmaz, 2011; Holton, 2010).

Results and Discussion

Open coding of the semi-structured interviews revealed five major collective themes – anxiety-squared, uncertainty, pressure and purpose, hope, and determination and resilience.

Anxiety-Squared

Focused coding revealed that Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne's experienced similar types of academic-related stress as compared to their citizen peers. These academic-related stressors, which included, adjusting and integrating into the college community, feeling un/underprepared for the rigors of college, keeping up with classwork and homework, completing projects on time, and studying for quizzes and tests were consistent across all three narrators and mirrors findings by Benuto et al. (2018), Casas et al. (2019), and Rodriguez, Myers, Morris, and Cardoza (2000).

The narrators have also dealt with realities similar to other ethnic minority students who are citizens. Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne all lamented a lack of undocumented role models whom they can look to for support and guidance and, in some cases, a lack of academic support during the application process. All agreed that these, in addition to better supports specifically geared towards undocumented students, would have helped them acclimate better to the academic demands of the university.

Additionally, as the first in their families to attend college, Cynthia and Ivonne had little to no familial guidance when it came to the college application and financial aid processes (Benuto et al., 2018; Casas et al., 2019; Lippicott & German, 2007; Terriquez, 2015). In her interviews, Cynthia explained that her parents tried to be as supportive as they could: "My parents...they don't speak English so they couldn't help much. If I needed to go somewhere, they drove me. But I was the one that had to do the legwork to get forms, fill them out, and turn them in." Cynthia's experience is not uncommon which research conducted by Cadenas et al. (2018) and Teranishi et al. (2015) finding that language and experience are two of the most

significant barriers to undocumented student access to higher education.

Further axial coding of the narrators' university experiences revealed several distinct ways in which their legal status exacerbated the previously noted "normal" and minority-specific academic stresses. For example, Cynthia and Ivonne, despite their DACA status, less access to federal, state, and college scholarships and financial assistance than their peers. Benuto et al. (2018), Bjorklund (2018), Casas et al. (2019), and Teranishi et al. (2015) all cite finances, and its associated stress, as one of a host of barriers preventing undocumented students from attending college.

Given the limitations in the kinds of financial aid for which she is eligible, Emma discussed this challenge has on her schoolwork:

There are times when I want to just...do my school work and be a "normal" college student. But I don't get to do that. I don't want to work. I have to work. It's the only way we can pay for college since I can't get much financial aid and my family doesn't want to take out a loan.

As the only narrator who does not have DACA status, Emma's resources were even more restricted. This limited her choices in how she and her family could pay for her college tuition. She explained her frustration: "If you just look at family income, I would absolutely qualify for financial aid...if I was a citizen or DACA. But because I'm undocumented, I don't have that option." As a result, Emma is forced to work while attending full time to pay for college as well as help support her family.

Cadenas et al. (2018) and Contreras (2009) note that it can be difficult for undocumented students to find resources or to even ask for help for fear of legal complications. Ivonne confirmed this experience: "We [undocumented students] don't know where these resources are because they aren't really advertised or just nobody tells us. It's almost like it's a secret and we only find...like someone tells someone else about a website or a phone number to call." During her interview, Emma described a challenging experience with her parents:

I really had to work to convince my parents to sign the college and financial aid forms. They knew it was necessary because they wanted me to go to college, but they were afraid...because they didn't know English and were worried that ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] would track them down through the paperwork.

An overarching and genuine fear of being deported linked all of the narrators. The fear of ICE and deportation has heightened the narrators' anxiety due to the uncertain future of DACA, DREAMers, and their families.

Uncertainty

Unlike Cynthia and Ivonne, Emma did not qualify and did not have DACA status because of when she was brought to the United States. Regardless, the lack of new immigration reform, lack of agreement by the state and federal governments and politicians on both sides of the aisle on what to do about DACA, and disagreement between political and judicial branches of government have left the narrators far from certain about their professional futures (Cadenas et al., 2018; Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015).

The narrators' frustration, due to various uncertainties, was revealed through thematic coding. Their frustration is in line with what Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) termed *interminable liminality* – "the transitional moment between spheres of belonging when social actors no longer belong to the group they are leaving behind and do not yet fully belong in their new social sphere" (p. 444). Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne have "no straightforward path to citizenship and no means for assimilation, despite being acculturated in U.S. schools and identifying as American" (Bjorklund, 2018, p. 632). Cynthia and Ivonne, in particular, expressed frustration at changes in state and federal immigration laws, especially inconsistencies surrounding the DREAM Act, DACA, and President Trump's immigration-related policies.

Due to the immigration-related limitations examined under the previous theme, Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne all expressed uncertainty about their lives outside and beyond university-life, and theme mirrored in research by Cadenas et al. (2018), Ellis and Chen (2013), Macías (2018), and (Pérez, 2009). Naturally, all of the narrators live with a certain amount of uncertainty due to their legal status. Cynthia elaborated on this point:

"This is a fear that is always...ALWAYS in the back of our minds as undocumented immigrants and undocumented students. Our legal status determines where we can get money for college, what schools we can go to, what jobs we can do when we graduate. Some of us [undocumented immigrants]...you never know if there's going to be an ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] raid and you might get a phone call that your parents or siblings were detained and are about to be deported."

All of the narrators noted that the fear of family members being arrested, detained, and deported is very real and can harm their schoolwork. Emma, the only non-DACA narrator, explained her feelings on this: “I try not to let it [fear] affect me. Like...I try not to come to school and worry that my parents will be taken away. I don’t want that to affect my schoolwork. But I do worry.” Even as DACA recipients, Cynthia and Ivonne agreed with Emma’s sentiments. Ivonne, in particular, noted that her schoolwork is sometimes negatively impacted when immigration is in the news.

Feelings of non-belonging in both the United States and Mexico cause additional uncertainty among the narrators. This sentiment mirrors a common refrain of “*Ni de aqui, ni de alla*—Neither from here nor from there,” according to Gurrola, Ayón, and Moya Salas (2016, p. 504). Cynthia and Ivonne came to the United States at three-years-old, and Emma arrived when she was eight. As a result, the narrators have little to no connection with their home country outside of phone calls or emails with relatives. All noted that love and celebrated their Mexican heritage. Ivonne explained: “I came here [the United States] when I was three. Even though I’m not ‘American,’ this is my home country. I don’t know anything about living in Mexico.” The narrators’ felt that their roots in the United States are more profound than their roots in Mexico, and they share American values despite never being fully allowed to belong to American society. As such, the narrators are simultaneously included and excluded.

The narrators’ uncertainty also extends beyond the personal into the professional. Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne were in their first year at a university. All three fully intend to graduate and, at the time of the interviews, identified their interest in becoming teachers. However, even though they can attend college, can graduate with degrees in teaching, and become certificated teachers, their immigrant status may prevent them from being hired as teachers. Cynthia expressed the frustration shared by all the narrators succinctly: “Sometimes I think, ‘what’s the point?’ Why am I spending all this time and money on college, getting a degree, if I’m going to end up cleaning houses with my mom?” The professional uncertainty, however, has not deterred any of the narrators. In addition to motivating them to be the best students they can be, it has also motivated some to become active in on and off-campus organizations that support and fight for undocumented immigrant rights.

Pressure and Purpose

During each of their interviews, Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne spoke at length on the demands and expectations to do their best and to succeed in college. According to research such as Crisp et al. (2015) and Perez (2009), the pressure to succeed is common among minorities in higher education, but more so among undocumented undergraduates. Narrators noted that the two most significant sources of external pressure were from their families and society-at-large. While acknowledging that this pressure can be overwhelming, thematic coding on this topic revealed all three of the narrators have, in some way, internalized these pressures to give them a sense of purpose.

Familial pressure comes from two senses of obligation. First and foremost, the narrators’ acknowledged the sacrifices their families made to bring them to the United States. For each of the narrators, the journey to the United States was expensive and complicated. In their interviews, all of the narrators were humbled by the risks and sacrifices by their parents and thanked them. After telling her story of how she came to the United States, Emma became silent and after a few minutes commented: “It still amazes me that my family did this and they did it for me (crying). I just need to do my best so that it was all worth it.” Cynthia echoed these feelings when discussing her parents’ sacrifices to bring her to the United States, adding: “They [her parents] gave up their lives so that I could have a better one...more opportunities. That’s heavy, and it’s not something that, I think, can be easily understood by citizens.” Ivonne, however, noted that her parent’s sacrifice creates an expectation on her academic performance:

It’s hard to explain, but, their sacrifice puts a lot of pressure on me. Like, if I get a bad grade, I’m letting them down. I’m letting down all the people who gave up their lives in Mexico so that I could have this opportunity. I feel like I’m rising to that challenge, but it’s hard when that’s hanging over you.

All of the narrators also hoped to repay that debt by doing well in their classes, graduating from college, and getting a good job. They acknowledged that a good job, like a being a teacher, will help their family financially and will show that the sacrifices that were made were not in vain.

Additional pressure comes from the fact that the narrators have younger siblings and cousins who look to the narrators for help and guidance. This is not lost on the narrators. Emma noted that her cousins often come to her for advice on schoolwork and college. Similarly, Cynthia has helped her family members in obtaining and filling out college-related paperwork. Cadenas et al. (2018) explain that older undocumented students become the “trailblazers” for their respective families. In this way, the narrators have become the role models that they never had with all three embracing that opportunity.

Cynthia explained: “I want to be that role model...for my cousins and for my future students. I didn’t have that, but I can be that for them.” As such, the narrators are fully aware that their performance in college influences other family members’ decisions on whether to go to college, particularly the young women in their families.

There is also external societal pressure stemming from their identity as undocumented immigrants, particularly since the 2016 election. Perez et al. (2009) and Perez et al. (2010) note that while undocumented students’ legal status is *an* identity lens through which they view the world, it is also *the* identity lens through which many individuals and organizations view them. As a result, all three narrators, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, recognize the need for and their roles as both representatives and spokespeople for undocumented immigrants. Emma and Ivonne have been reluctant to take on the role of “social justice warrior.” Cynthia, on the other hand, has embraced her role willingly and feels like she has to be a “model” to others (i.e., faculty, citizen peers) who may otherwise think negatively about undocumented immigrants.

Not only are all of the narrators determined to succeed in college, they also want to give back to their families and their communities. Cynthia, in particular, felt a strong desire to fight for the rights of the people in their communities and other undocumented people. This sense of responsibility serves as motivation to succeed in school and provides the narrators with a sense of purpose greater than themselves.

Optimism and Hope

Two of the most striking characteristics of the narrators, which crossed over into all of the themes and interviews, was their optimism and hope. This is significant for two reasons. First, as a distinct minority in the college community, and a group that is prone to disparaging comments in politics and the media, it would be easy for the narrators to play victims. It would also be easy for the narrators to use any feelings of limitation, lack of privilege, disempowerment, and otherness as excuses to any shortcomings they may face or to show anger towards their citizen peers and college faculty. This is not to say that the narrators do not get angry or frustrated. During her interview, Emma explained why anger, for her, is not the solution: “Yeah, I get pissed off. Who wouldn’t? But if I let it get the best of me, that just feeds into the anti-immigrant narrative.” However, instead of playing the angry victim, the narrators explained that they use their negative feelings as fuel for their academic success and, to a certain extent, social activism.

Another reason the optimism and hope are significant is undocumented immigrants, and many other first-generation college students, are typically viewed through a deficit model and portrayed as lacking in the skills, knowledge, and cultural capital necessary to be successful in higher education. Similar to Cisneros and Lopez (2016), DeAngelo, Schuster, and Stebleton (2016), Katsiaficas, Volpe, Raza, and Garcia (2017), and Tovar (2015), Cynthia wanted to focus on her strengths and the strengths of the undocumented community: “We got skills! (laughs) You said there are more of us [undocumented undergraduates] than ever before in college? That’s despite all the challenges we face...ICE, deportation, language. That’s the makings of a success story!” All of the narrators agreed that despite the challenges, they are very hopeful about their futures and the future of their community.

The hope the narrators have is both internal and external. Internally, the narrators are hopeful about their futures and the success they will have personally and professionally. Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne were excited to be in college and were ready to meet new people and have new experiences and adventures. Externally, the narrators recognize that they serve as hope for other undocumented students, particularly family members, who want to go to college. The narrators hoped they could serve as a positive example of undocumented immigrants and counter the narrative that they are “takers.”

Determination and resilience

All three narrators are determined to do well in their classes, complete college on time, obtain jobs in their chosen field of study, and become contributing members of American society. Bjorklund (2018) explains that “to overcome the manifold barriers that undocumented students face and to persist in higher education, studies have found that they must exhibit a tremendous amount of motivation and desire to succeed” (p. 653). Based on thematic coding, narrators’ determination and resilience comes from three primary sources – family, an “I’ll show you” mentality, and on-campus social networks. These sub-themes mirror those found in the previously cited study as well as Macías (2018) and Teranishi et al. (2015).

First, the narrators stressed that they gain a great deal of strength from their families. As described in previous themes, all three narrators are determined to be successful as a way of thanking their families for their past and current sacrifices. In her interviews, Ivonne specifically cited her parents’ struggle to bring her to the United States and their work ethic as her

inspirations. In this vein, the narrators considered themselves to be lucky to attend college, which serves as further motivation. O'Neal et al. (2016) found that undocumented students displayed *grit*, which they defined as a "passion and perseverance towards long-term goals" (Duckworth et al., as cited in O'Neal et al., 2016, p. 449). When asked about the idea of *grit*, the narrators agreed and found it amusing as the University uses the word "grit" as a campus slogan. Not only did the narrators feel that their grit helped them overcome barriers to their educational success and focus on the big picture. Asked to clarify this distinction, Emma explained:

I can't speak for everyone, but I feel like typical college students...those who are citizens...they don't really look at the big picture. Maybe it's because it was a given that they would go to college. Maybe they don't have to work to pay for college. They don't look at the long-term, like, 'if I don't pass this class, how will that affect me graduating on time?' Undocumented students, again I can't speak for everyone, we look at the long-term, so we can make sure that we do well and graduate on time. A lot of us don't have the time or money to mess around and not pass classes.

Similarly, Cynthia and Ivonne also felt that having a long-term goal distinguished them from typical college students.

Secondly, Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne all displayed an "I'll show you" mentality which guides and inspires them. Research with undocumented students, Benuto et al. (2018), Contreras (2009), Contreras and Contreras (2015), and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) in particular, have shown that undocumented students frequently use their feelings of limitation, otherness, and disempowerment to fuel their motivation to succeed personally and professionally. Each of the narrators acknowledged that, whether they like it or not, they are the "model" by which others – family members, pro- and anti-immigrant groups, college instructors, future employers, and citizen peers – will judge both the (un)documented immigrant community. When asked about the idea of a "model minority" Emma elaborated on her desire to prove wrong all those who look negatively upon both undocumented and legal immigrants: "I know that I'm more than just a [undocumented] student. But if that's the first thing people see or will say when they see me, then I'm going to be the best one [undocumented student] I can be!" Ivonne also explained her desire to challenge stereotypes within the immigrant community: "Sometimes the discussion [within the immigration community] is just as toxic as outside. We don't think we're good enough or smart enough...I want others to see that we can do anything." Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne, like students noted in previously cited studies, channel their desire to challenge stereotypes and obstacles associated with their status to strengthen their resilience and determination.

Finally, it should come as no surprise that reliable social networks reinforce the resilience of the narrators. In their study, Ellis and Chen (2013) noted that students find strength in dual identities derived from school and their home and host cultures. Moreover, resiliency is enhanced as students who share these dual identities work collaboratively, and at times creatively, to overcome struggles in their path. However, unlike other identity-related or special interest student organizations, there are no official undocumented immigrant student organizations on campus. Cynthia described how the dual student-immigrant identity is essential: "Not all college students are undocumented, so they don't know what it's like to be us. Also, not all us [undocumented immigrants] go to college, so they don't understand the academic pressures." Cynthia further explained that not only is it important to her to know and talk with people who have had the same experiences with their legal status as she has had, but it is crucial that they are college students too.

The narrators explained that undocumented students find each other regardless and support one another informally. Emma explained that "it's like we [undocumented students] have a kind of radar for each other." Similar to the experiences of other ethnic minorities in college, the narrators view this support system as crucial to their success despite the lack of formality.

Conclusions

Despite the small sample size, the narrators' first-year experiences as undocumented undergraduates live a reality that is different and, for understandable reasons, generally hidden from view. While this study focused on the unique lens through which the narrators view their first-year experiences, there are also similarities. The narrators' experiences and feelings associated with those experiences are in line with those of undocumented undergraduates in the previously cited literature. There are also similarities between the undocumented undergraduates and the first-year experiences of their minority/non-minority citizen peers. Relatively high levels of anxiety, feelings of insecurity and unpreparedness, as well as pressure to perform resonated with undocumented and citizen undergraduates alike.

The typical stresses of university life marked Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne's first-year experience. Attending classes, studying, and taking tests are stressful for all university students. In final interviews of their first year, all of the narrators in the overall project had a chance to reflect and comment on their overall first-year experience. All of the narrators, including Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne, admitted that the spring semester was not as "exciting" as the fall. They also admitted to

experiencing a spring semester malaise, in which their motivation to attend class, study, and do well on tests decreased. In this way, some of Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne's experiences mirrored those of their citizen peers.

Although they experience challenges that their citizen peers do not, Cynthia, Emma, and Ivonne all display strength, confidence, hope, and optimism about their abilities, college, and future professional careers. They understood that they are lucky even to attend college and that with great opportunity comes great responsibility. The themes generated through this analysis show a small group of students who are excited about college and the new experiences it will bring. However, they are also concerned about the future for other undocumented students. Wrapping up our interview, Ivonne noted that her struggle to get to college should not be standard practice: "I made it to college. But it was hard, and I didn't have much support. My hope is that me being here will make it easier for someone else." As such, there has been a substantial discussion with equally strong recommendations on how to best support undocumented students.

Congress' inability or unwillingness to pass a uniform federal immigration law has negatively impacted college access and attainment for undocumented undergraduates. As noted previously, there is a temptation to view undocumented undergraduates through a deficit lens. Instead of focusing on the negative, scholars such as Cisneros and Lopez (2016), DeAngelo et al. (2016), Katsiaticas et al. (2017), and Tovar (2015) argue that college counselors, faculty, and staff should focus on valuing the social and cultural capital undocumented college students are utilizing to be successful. Using Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth, Pérez Huber (2009) emphasizes seven types of capital— aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and spiritual – which are consistent with those the narrators described in their interviews.

At the institutional level, Cisneros and Lopez (2016), Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015), Teranishi et al. (2015), and Terriquez (2015) offer specific implications for policymakers and concrete suggestions to institutions looking to create a more inclusive campus atmosphere and improve access and support for undocumented students. First and foremost, they suggest that colleges and universities unequivocally "proclaim their commitment to and support for undocumented students as members of their campus communities. This endorsement should reflect their commitment to welcome, embrace, recognize, acknowledge, and provide a safe space for these students" (p. 21). This statement would accompany concrete actions that demonstrate to undocumented students, and their citizen peers, the university's commitment.

For example, universities should strive to improve and expand high school to college transition and mentor programs aimed towards undocumented student recruitment, support, and retention. As the number of undocumented undergraduates has increased, so to should staff, faculty, and counseling awareness increase and improve. Universities should look to establish undocumented allies on campus – akin to LGBTQ safe spaces – where students are free to disclose their legal status and create of resource centers to provide undocumented students safe spaces to meet and find resources and services. A combination of these institutional interventions, in conjunction with formal guidelines, could improve access and support for undocumented undergraduates.

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AN EXAMINATION OF PREPARATION PRACTICES TEACHER EDUCATORS USE TO DEVELOP UNDERSTANDINGS FOR LEARNER DEVELOPMENT, LEARNING DIFFERENCES, AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AMONG PRESERVICE SPECIAL EDUCATORS

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Abstract

Special education teacher educators face increasing demands to prepare competent and high-quality novice special education teachers. During special education teacher preparation, teacher educators must develop preservice special educators' understandings with the specialized expertise required in the field. Recently, we conducted a state-based analysis of special education teacher preparation in Texas to gain a better understanding of the preparation practices teacher educators use to prepare preservice special educators. In the present research, we focused our analysis on two important areas of special education expertise: 1) learner development and individual learning differences, and 2) learning environments. Our findings showed strengths and shortcomings in special education teacher preparation. We provided a discussion of these findings, implications for teacher preparation program stakeholders, limitations in the present research, and recommendations for future studies.

Keywords: learner development, learning differences, learning environments, special education, teacher preparation

Teacher quality is a major determinant that contributes to academic success among PK-12 students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber, 2016; Hightower et al., 2011). In an effort to ensure novice teachers enter the teacher workforce as high-quality, well-prepared professionals, they must first experience effective teacher training in their teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hollins, 2011; Zeichner, 2006, 2012). Teacher preparation programs must offer preservice teachers a coherent sequence of closely aligned coursework and field experiences that develop a foundation of knowledge about content, learners, and pedagogical practices. Additionally, teacher preparation programs must provide preservice teachers with frequent opportunities to practice learned aspects of teaching with actual students in authentic classroom contexts.

Within the area of special education teacher preparation, a primary goal is to prepare confident and competent special

educators who understand how to select and implement evidence-based practices that enhance and individualize learning among students with exceptionalities (Richards, 2010; Scheeler, Budin, & Markelz, 2016; Shepherd, Fowler, McCormick, Wilson, & Morgan, 2016). However, rising concerns about teacher effectiveness have placed greater expectations on teacher preparation programs to ensure novice special educators receive sufficient preparation with “the full range of special education candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions” (McCall, Alvarez-McHatton, & Shealey, 2014, p. 65). Demands placed on teacher preparation programs in the field of special education have significantly changed by the need to improve accountability in teacher preparation programs (McCall et. al, 2014), the expectation that novice special educators are able to address the needs of all learners (Smith et. al, 2010), pervasive special education faculty shortage (Robb, Smith & Montrosse, 2012; West & Hardman, 2012), and decreased supply and demand of special education teachers (Tyler, Montrosse & Smith, 2012). Teacher preparation programs that train special educators grapple with how to implement a more cohesive program that aligns with changes in teacher education and yield’s a beginning educator that is prepared to face the realities of today’s classroom (Dukes, Darling, & Doan, 2014; Markelz, Riden, & Scheeler, 2017).

Developing pedagogical content knowledge among future teachers is a central aspect of teacher preparation (Shulman, 1986). In the field of special education, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2015) defined the specialized expertise required among novice special educators in the form of six initial preparation standards (see Figure 1). These standards provide teacher preparation programs with an invaluable guide with which to develop and evaluate the content of their programs.

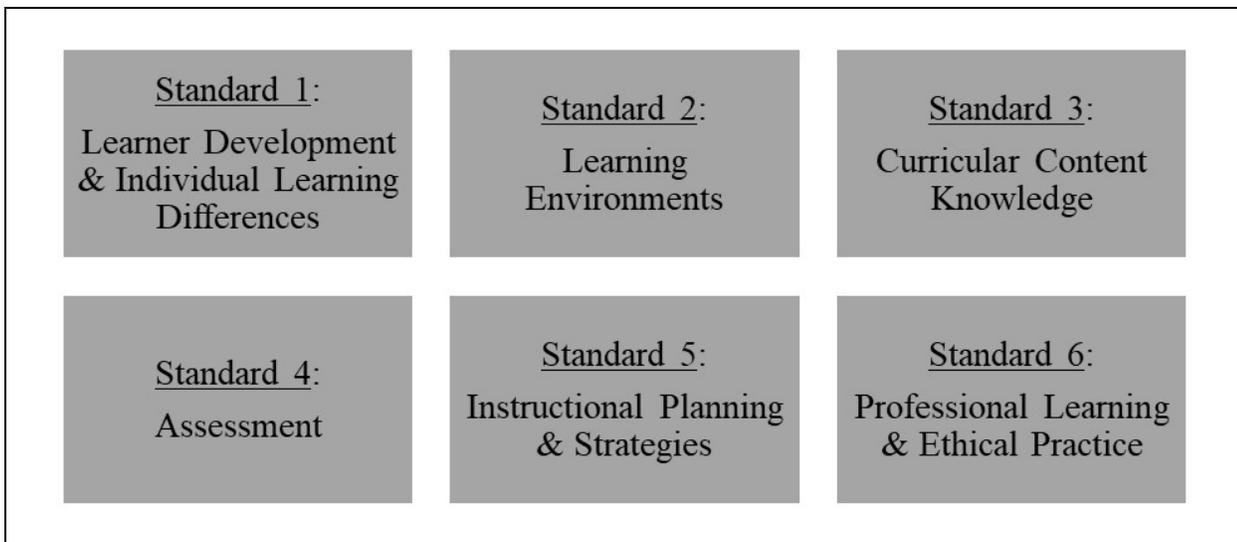


Figure 1. CEC’s (2015) six initial preparation standards.

Building upon the initial standards for professional practice identified by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), CEC and the Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center recently published a collection of 22 high-leverage practices (Riccomini, Morano, & Hughes, 2017; TEC, 2017). These high-leverage practices (HLPs) identified by the CEC and CEEDAR Center are professional practices special education researchers and relevant organizations determined must be taught in all special education teacher preparation programs. The CEC and CEEDAR Center replicate and reinforce the initial preparation standards required of special education teachers identified in Standards 1 and 2 of Standards for Professional Practice (CEC, 2015) in the 22 HLPs by stating that “teaching students with disabilities is a strategic, flexible and recursive process” that requires special education teachers develop specially designed instruction (McClesky et. al, 2017, p. 17). Effective special education teachers must design instruction and create learning environments that are based upon the learning differences and individual needs of each student (CEC, 2015; McClesky et. al, 2017; Riccomini et. al, 2017; TEC, 2017).

The focus of the present research was on the first two CEC initial preparation standards (CEC, 2015). The first standard specifies that novice special educators must understand the interaction between disabilities and student development and learning (CEC, 2015). There are two key elements associated with this standard:

- 1) Novice special educators understand how culture, family background, and language influence learning among students with disabilities.
- 2) Novice special educators design responsive instruction based upon student needs.

The second standard specifies that novice special educators know how to establish culturally responsive, inclusive, and safe learning environments to develop self-determination and social-emotional wellbeing among students with disabilities. There are three key elements associated with this standard:

- 1) Novice special educators collaborate with others to engage students with disabilities in relevant learning activities and positive social interactions.
- 2) Novice special educators use interventions that empower students with disabilities to be adaptable in various environments.
- 3) Novice special educators know how to intervene appropriately and safely when students with disabilities are in crisis.

Special educators contend with job responsibilities and work that is “more complex, intensive, and demanding” than mainstream teachers (Hillel Lavian, 2015, p. 109). To ensure students with disabilities make sufficient educational progress, special educators must use high-leverage practices that are “evidence-based and highly responsive” to the varied learning needs of students with disabilities (CEC & CEEDAR Center, 2017, p. 8).

Ensuring that novice special educators enter the teaching workforce well prepared for the myriad of responsibilities involved in special education, makes critical the examination of teacher preparation practices by researchers. Although recent research has emphasized a great need for improvement with special education teacher preparation (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010; Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, & Kiely, 2015; Markelz et al., 2017; Shepherd et al., 2016), we located only two published studies that examined teacher preparation in relation to the CEC’s (2015) most recent version of their initial preparation standards. Both of these studies focused on perceived levels of self-efficacy among preservice (Lombardo-Graves, 2017) and practicing special educators (Gavish, Bar-On, & Shein-Kahalon, 2016). We were unable to locate any corresponding studies that ascertained the views of preparedness from those who prepare special educators—teacher educators. To address this gap in available research, we conducted a Texas-based study to gain a better understanding of the preparation practices teacher educators use to prepare preservice special educators for proficiency with each of the CEC’s (2015) initial preparation standards. Since the focus of the present research was on the first two standards, the following research questions guided our qualitative inquiry: How do teacher educators develop preservice special educators’ understandings with learner development and individual learning differences? How do teacher educators develop preservice special educators’ understandings with learning environments?

Methods

Participants

We used purposive sampling techniques to create a research sample of teacher educators in Texas. Using the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) website, we identified 55 state-accredited, university-based teacher preparation programs that prepare special educators (TEA, n.d.). Among these teacher preparation programs, we accessed publicly available information on each university’s website (i.e., class schedules, departmental faculty listings) to create a participant pool of teacher educators who specialize in special education. Our efforts resulted in a participant pool of 283 members.

Instrumentation

For the larger scale, state-level study, we developed an electronic questionnaire in Google Forms that included the following items:

- 1) demographic questions to collect information for gender, age range, and years of experience in teacher education;
- 2) 28 Likert-scale questions to collect information related to respondents’ views of preservice special educators’ preparedness with the key elements associated with the CEC’s (2015) standards; and
- 3) six open-ended questions for respondents to describe in their own words preparation practices they use to develop preservice special educators’ understandings with each of the CEC’s (2015) standards.

When the electronic questionnaire was developed, we conducted a pilot test to evaluate the appropriateness, clarity, and readability of items and test functionality of the electronic platform. We invited 20 individuals from our professional networks to participate in the pilot test, which included 10 teacher educators who were affiliated with teacher preparation programs beyond Texas and 10 special education teachers who were employed in school districts located in Texas. All individuals agreed to participate and emailed us feedback after they completed the electronic questionnaire. We reviewed all feedback provided, as well as their responses to the questionnaire items, and made only minor revisions in wording to enhance readability.

Data Collection and Analysis

For the larger scale, state-level study, we collected data for three months. First, we sent an initial email to all members of the participant pool requesting their participation. In the email, we explained the purpose of our study, provided pertinent information (e.g., confidentiality statement, institutional review board approval, instructions on how to participate), and included a web link to the electronic questionnaire. Once respondents accessed the questionnaire, they had to provide consent before they were given access to questionnaire items. After the initial email was sent, we sent two monthly follow-up emails to encourage participation. When the response period closed, we received 46 completed questionnaires, thereby yielding a return rate of 16%.

The present research was a smaller part of the larger scale, state-level study. Our goal was to identify preparation practices that respondents use to develop preservice special educators' understandings with learner development and individual learning differences and learning environments. To achieve this goal, we retrieved demographic data and qualitative data respondents provided for the following two open-ended questions on the completed questionnaires: 1) Specifically, how do you promote special educators' understanding with learner development and individual learning differences? 2) Specifically, how do you promote special educators' understandings with learning environments?

Prior to beginning data analysis, we met as a research team and developed a systematic coding scheme for the qualitative data retrieved using two levels of coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The first author reviewed all data independently, and used open coding to assign preliminary codes to initial concepts. Second, axial coding was used to organize related codes together, form categories, and identify the presence of sub-categories. While coding, the first author kept anecdotal notes and maintained a codebook to document the occurrence and frequency of codes (Saldaña, 2016). All authors collaborated frequently to discuss internal thoughts, explore emerging ideas, and ensure accuracy among the data. Once independent analysis was complete, a thorough review of data was performed to cross-check and corroborate findings.

Results

We received completed questionnaires from 46 respondents, who were mostly female ($n = 36$), over 40 years of age ($n = 38$) and had five or more years of experiences with preparing special educators ($n = 41$). Of the 46 completed questionnaires, 39 respondents provided responses to the first open-ended question in the present research (i.e., Specifically, how do you promote special educators' understanding with learner development and individual learning differences?), which consisted of 703 words. Alternatively, 37 respondents provided responses to the second open-ended question in the present research (i.e., Specifically, how do you promote special educators' understandings with learning environments?), which consisted of 700 words. Therefore, we analyzed a total of 1,403 words qualitatively from which three themes emerged: Field Experiences, Coursework, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Below, we provided a description of each theme and included direct excerpts from questionnaire responses.

Field Experiences

Within this theme, respondents made references to field experiences that enhance special educators' understandings of learner development, learner differences, and learning environments. Respondents shared that they provide preservice special educators with "repeated exposure to various special education settings." Within these settings, preservice special educators "conduct observations," "meet with the teachers," and engage in a wide range of "face-to-face experiences with individuals with disabilities." In addition to providing preservice special educators with regular access to actual students in authentic school contexts, respondents recognized the importance of ensuring that "fieldwork aligns with and provides opportunities to apply course content." A common way that respondents connected field experiences with course content was by requiring preservice special educators to "write and teach lesson plans to meet the needs of all learners with a focus on engaging all students. [Lesson plans] are evaluated by both mentor teachers and university supervisors, and include self-evaluations." Similarly, one respondent described a more in-depth field experience that provided preservice special educators with a "hands-on experience" to practice using positive behavioral supports among students with challenging behaviors:

I have my preservice [special educators] select a student with disabilities who demonstrates challenging behaviors. They are tasked to conduct observations, select a target behavior, gather data, use assessment tools, and have the parents, teachers or whomever is willing to participate, to also fill out the tools on the target behavior. Then, preservice [special educators] create a plan to address the target behavior so that it helps the student gain more instructional time and have appropriate social interactions with peers without the competing problem behaviors.

Respondents emphasized that field experiences provide preservice special educators with opportunities to “apply what they are learning and move from theory to practice.” However, there did not appear to be consistency in how field experiences were addressed among different teacher preparation programs. For example, one respondent stated that preservice special educators “participate in special education K-12 field experiences in every course they take.” Alternatively, another respondent shared, “We provide field experience opportunities throughout the program, but we need more hours to be truly impactful.”

Coursework

Within this theme, respondents made references to learning experiences that occur within the context of university-based coursework. Respondents indicated that they primarily rely on “in-depth,” “explicit instruction” to address “learner development,” “individual learning differences,” and “varied learning environments.” Examples of lecture topics included “developmental trajectories,” “learning characteristics of students based on their cognitive strengths and deficits,” “the C-H-C [Cattell-Horn-Carroll] theory” of cognitive abilities,” “least restrictive environments,” “how to respond to behavior,” and “how to set up [learning environments] for engagement and accessibility.”

In addition to lectures, respondents also relied heavily upon “course discussion” to promote deeper thinking among preservice special educators. Respondents indicated that class discussions were an effective way to stimulate deep thinking about:

- the array of special education services (e.g., “We discuss LRE [least restrictive environment] and the continuum of service offered.”),
- learning environments (e.g., “We talk about different environments, but specifically creating a learning environment that is successful and safe for all individuals.”), and
- responsive instruction based upon learner differences (e.g., “We talk extensively about how each learner is different and will bring different characteristics to our classrooms, and they [preservice special educators] learn to design their interventions with this in mind.”).

Following class discussions, respondents often provided preservice special educators with opportunities “to apply the knowledge to demonstrate skill acquisition” through hands-on, “application-based assignments” and “authentic assessments.” For example, following an instructor-led class discussion on assessment practices, preservice special educators may “practice using data-based decision making . . . to consider individual differences in their instruction” or “using results of assessments (both formal and informal) to design individualized goals and select subsequent intervention strategies.”

Overall, respondents seemed confident with the content and learning experiences addressed in university-based coursework. Respondents conveyed that they drew upon “current research” to design “carefully-constructed curricula with specific, evidence-based practices and applied examples.” As a result of these efforts, one respondent asserted, “Our [preservice special educators] are very well trained in classroom structures and management and how to integrate behavioral components into their instruction and interventions.” Likewise, another respondent maintained that the courses in their respective teacher preparation program were “in direct alignment” with specialized expertise required among novice special educators. However, some respondents expressed concerns about specific topics that were not addressed during special education teacher preparation. These included “crisis intervention,” “collaboration with general education,” “severe disabilities,” and “self-contained environments.”

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Within this theme, respondents referred to ways in which they promote the development of culturally responsive pedagogy among preservice special educators. In most cases, the focus on culturally responsive pedagogy was connected to teacher certification requirements. For example, one respondent explained that preservice special educators enrolled in their teacher preparation program are required to obtain Texas teacher certification for both English as a second language (ESL) and special education. This respondent further explained that preservice special educators completed “an ESL block” of courses to “allow them more exposure to differences across time, [thereby] increasing the opportunity to gain a solid understanding.”

In other cases, respondents indicated that culturally responsive pedagogy was a topic “embedded in many courses” throughout their respective teacher preparation programs. Within their courses, respondents lectured to “build [preservice special educators’] knowledge of strategies when working with LEP [limited English proficiency] students;” facilitated class discussions “about second language development, culture, and individual differences, some of which are considered disabilities;” prepared “demonstrations of pedagogy associated with working with students with disabilities and ELLs [English

language learners];” and provided guided learning experiences that appraise the influence of “cultural and language impacts.” Respondents also noted they bridge preservice special educators’ understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy learned during coursework with field experiences in diverse school settings.

Discussion

Findings from the present research have provided fresh insights to an under-researched area and generated a preliminary snapshot of special education teacher preparation in Texas. Specifically, we elicited the viewpoints of teacher educators to identify specific preparation practices they use to develop preservice special educators’ understandings for three specific areas delineated in two of the CEC’s (2015) initial preparation standards: learner development, learning differences, and learning environments. Our qualitative analysis of data produced three themes (i.e., Field Experiences, Coursework, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy) from which we identified strengths and shortcomings.

With respect to strengths, it is evident that respondents were familiar with the specific key elements associated with the two CEC (2015) standards used as the framework in the present research. This was not surprising being that the majority of questionnaire respondents had several years of teaching experiences with preservice special educators. This finding also further confirmed that the research sample was a representative group of experienced teacher educators who were knowledgeable of the specialized expertise required among novice special educators. In Table 1 below, we provided sample direct excerpts from respondents’ questionnaire responses that describe preparation practices they use to develop preservice special educators’ understandings of each key element associated with learner development, individual learning differences, and learning environments.

Table 1

Sample Excerpts in Relation to Key Elements Associated with CEC’s (2015) Standards 1 and 2

Standard 1: Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences	
Key Elements	Sample Excerpts
1) Novice special educators understand how culture, family background, and language influence learning among students with disabilities.	“We look at assessment results based on cultural and language impacts.” “I talk extensively with [preservice special educators] about second language development, culture, and individual differences, some of which are considered disabilities.”
2) Novice special educators design responsive instruction based upon student needs.	“We emphasize learning characteristics of students based on their cognitive strengths and deficits and help [preservice special educators] learn to differentiate instruction based on individual learning needs.” “[Preservice special educators] write and teach lesson plans to meet the needs of all learners with a focus on engaging all students.”
Standard 2: Learning Environments	
Key Elements	Sample Excerpts
1) Novice special educators collaborate with others to engage students with disabilities in relevant learning activities and positive social interactions.	“. . . preservice [special educators] create a plan to address the target behavior so that it helps the student gain more instructional time and have appropriate social interactions with peers without the competing problem behaviors.”
2) Novice special educators use interventions that empower students with disabilities to be adaptable in various environments.	“We emphasize learning styles and classroom environments that meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. This includes lighting, seating, arrangement of learning area, and instructional technology.”
3) Novice special educators know how to intervene appropriately and safely when students with disabilities are in crisis.	“Crisis/safety issues are covered in one designated course each semester.” “[Preservice special educators] do not receive specific training on crisis intervention.”

With respect to shortcomings, our findings suggested that field experiences and coursework continue to be predominantly addressed as separate program requirements during special educator teacher preparation. For over a decade, education researchers have advocated for a practice-based approach in teacher preparation that situates learning in actual school-based contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Hollins, 2011; Zeichner, 2012). Through a practice-based approach, coursework and field-based experiences occur in tandem and reinforce “learning to teach” through “collaboration, coherence, continuity and consistency, and integrity and trustworthiness” (Hollins, 2011, p. 405). In today’s schools, special educators

grapple with a myriad of complexities, including greater accountability, standardization, and increased diversity among students (Shepherd et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that novice special educator enter schools as well-trained and highly competent professionals (Vernon-Dotson, Floyd, Dukes, & Darling, 2014).

In addition to programmatic structure, our findings suggested a need for teacher educators to review the program content addressed in their teacher preparation programs to ensure its relevance. We found it interesting that respondents made no specific references to high-leverage practices (HLPs) in their questionnaire responses. These HLPs reinforce the key elements defined within the CEC's (2015) initial preparation standards through four different aspects of practice in special education: Assessment, Collaboration, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Practices, and Instruction. Given the complexities associated with special education, special educators must have a deep and comprehensive understanding of students with disabilities that allows them to support and respond to the diverse and complex needs of students with disabilities (McLeskey et al., 2017). In the present research, we acknowledge that we did not make specific inquiries about HLPs in the questionnaire. However, we did find it interesting that respondents did not mention them.

With these shortcomings in mind, our findings have important implications for multiple teacher preparation program stakeholders, including administrators, staff members, and teacher educators. All teacher preparation program stakeholders must be committed to ensuring that the design of their teacher preparation programs align with the CEC's (2015) initial preparation standards, address HLPs, and incorporate a range and variety of practice-based opportunities with real students in authentic school contexts. Given this information, it is recommended that teacher preparation program stakeholders conduct thorough program evaluations as a collective group to evaluate the effectiveness of coursework and field experiences. By working as a collective group, teacher preparation program stakeholders have the opportunity to engage in dialogue, hear multiple perspectives, and resolve discrepancies to strengthen the quality of special education teacher preparation. Moreover, each teacher preparation program stakeholder must stay current with research in special education teacher preparation and promote collective capacity with evidence-based preparation practices that strengthen program effectiveness.

An obvious limitation in the present research was the low response rate for the electronic questionnaires. Despite attempts to remedy nonresponse bias, the survey response return rate was only 16%. A number of factors may have influenced participation in the present research, such as accuracy of information among participant pool member, hesitancy to participate in an online questionnaire, or receipt of the emailed invitation to participate. In order to address this limitation, future studies may consider using a variety of strategies to increase participation. Possible strategies may be partnering with a state-based professional organization or recruiting participants at discipline-based professional conferences and meetings. Another limitation in the present research was the data collection method. It is understood that data collected were limited to respondents' understandings and interpretations of the open-ended questions, as well as their availability and willingness to provide specific responses. One way in which future studies may overcome this limitation is by using alternative data collection methods, such as individual or focus group interviews. By doing so, the interviewer is able to establish welcoming atmosphere that helps participants feel at ease and use probing techniques that elicit more detailed responses.

Conclusion

The roles and responsibilities of special educators continually evolve, particularly in an era of ever-changing legislation and mandates. Novice special educators must leave their teacher preparation programs and enter school contexts as competent, well-trained professionals. Thus, teacher educators who are responsible for preparing future special education teachers for crossing the thresh hold of university programs to classroom contexts must grapple with standards-based content delivery and evidence-based pedagogical practices. Specifically, special education teachers must be able to provide students with learning differences individualized instruction, and supportive learning environments. Teacher educators can ensure the targeted delivery of instructional services through authentic instructional experiences, connectivity between course instruction and field-based experiences, and culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

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ELEMENTARY CAMPUS PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEXAS TEACHER EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEM (T-TESS)

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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to: (a) examine new and experienced elementary campus principals' perceptions of the Texas Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS); and (b) identify factors contributing to the perceptions of new and experienced elementary campus principals with regard to the T-TESS. A purposeful sample of new and experienced elementary school principals representing 64 T-TESS pilot districts provided responses to the Texas Evaluator Perceptions of T-TESS Survey. An independent samples t test, frequencies, and percentages analyzed quantitative findings, while an inductive coding process revealed the qualitative data. Quantitative results indicated there were no significant differences between new and experienced principals with regard to value, goal setting and professional development, system structure, and implementation fidelity. However, there were significant barriers for campus principals to consider for effectively implementing T-TESS. Qualitative findings indicated elementary principals agreed that the T-TESS allowed teachers to receive accurate and valuable information regarding their individual instructional performance and that the teacher evaluation instrument encouraged continuous professional growth. Findings revealed four themes that explained new and experienced principals implementation perceptions of T-TESS: [(a) lacks appropriate training, (b) ongoing, (c) outcome is determined by the owners, and (d) time consuming.]

Keywords: principal perceptions, standards-based teacher evaluation, T-TESS

Within the past few years, states and school districts across the U.S. initiated processes to redevelop their teacher evaluation systems in order to provide teachers with meaningful feedback (Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). Since teacher effectiveness has been found to be closely aligned to student achievement, lawmakers have sought ways to improve the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom (Hallinger, Heck, & Murphy, 2014). However, Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) found that teacher evaluators in the past have not always fully utilized teacher evaluation instruments in order to provide adequate and accurate feedback to teachers regarding their teaching effectiveness.

Designed by Texas educators, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System, (T-TESS) was piloted by 64 Texas districts in 2014-2015 as a way to improve teacher effectiveness. This new performance-based teacher evaluation system evaluated teachers using six standards: “instructional planning and delivery, knowledge of students and student learning, content knowledge and expertise, learning environment, data driven practice, and professional practices and responsibilities” (TEA, 2016a, p. 5). The Texas Commissioner's Rules regarding educator standards also required teachers to create, aim for, and achieve professional goals to improve and support his or her instructional practice. Support was offered to teachers in meeting students' needs (Texas Commissioner's Rules Concerning Teacher Standards, 2018a). Since implementation, there has been limited research regarding the effectiveness of T-TESS in improving teachers' professional practice.

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to: (a) examine perceptions of new elementary campus principals and experienced elementary campus principals regarding the new standards-based teacher evaluation system currently used in Texas

in measuring teacher performance and growth; (b) identify factors contributing to the perceptions of new elementary campus principals and experienced elementary campus principals regarding the new standards-based teacher evaluation system in Texas; and (c) to inform teachers, campus principals, and especially elected officials on the value of the current Texas teacher evaluation system and its capacity to influence teacher professional performance and growth. The following research questions guided this study.

1. Was there a difference in perceived value of T-TESS between new and experienced elementary school principals?
2. Was there a difference between new and experienced elementary school principals regarding the T-TESS Goal Setting and Professional Development dimension (GSPD)?
3. What were the implementation perceptions of campus elementary school principals utilizing T-TESS?

Literature Review

Effective teacher evaluation systems have repeatedly isolated and quantified teacher strengths and shortcomings so teachers received specific, usable feedback in order to improve their practice. Data from effective teacher evaluation systems also provided evaluators with information needed to effectively allocate resources for teacher and school improvement (Weisberg et al., 2009). Since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), a major focus of education has been to close student achievement gaps at all levels and provide all students with a just, equal, and substantial opportunity to acquire a first-rate education. As a result, teacher evaluation systems have gained popularity to help meet this challenge.

The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) has offered each teacher the opportunity to improve his or her craft by providing goal identification and attainment-through professional growth opportunities (TEA, 2016b). An integral part of T-TESS design was the opportunity to change the evaluation paradigm from that of teacher inadequacy to a new, robust pattern of ongoing collaborative, continual feedback designed to improve professional growth and development (TEA, 2016b). The responsibility to adhere to these tenets has been principally left to appraisers. T-TESS has offered appraisers important opportunities to provide actionable, timely feedback to teachers during the pre-conference and post conference phases, periodically through the goal setting and professional development phase, and during student growth discussions (TEA, 2016a). Each of these key areas allowed teachers the opportunity to self-reflect on personal instructional practices and identify areas for improvement (TEA, 2016a). Teachers have been encouraged to implement necessary changes to classroom instruction as his or her reflections deemed appropriate.

Since its inception in 2014, T-TESS has been publicized as a teacher evaluation instrument that encouraged collaboration between the principals and teachers to improve the teaching process through ongoing dialogue (TEA, 2016a; Templeton, Willis, & Hendricks, 2016). Sixteen dimensions encompass the T-TESS evaluation criteria which were designed to support the teaching process by identifying specific reinforcement and refinement areas deemed vital for the improvement of instructional teaching practices (TEA, 2015; 2016a). The T-TESS Goal Setting and Professional Diminsion (GSPD) enabled principals and teachers to document goal attainment progress with a flexible tracking document based on a teacher's goals and feedback (TEA, 2015).

Principals Perceptions

New Principal Perceptions

New principals have often felt overwhelmed and in survival mode (Kersten, 2010) due to the nature of the position. Novice administrators often encountered more issues leading their campuses than that of experienced principals (Sodoma & Else, 2009). This has resulted in frustration the time constraints and demands associated with the job. This was consistent with the findings of research conducted in this area (Lunenburg, 2010; Wells, 2013). Research further indicated new principals devoted less time and attention to instructional leadership and more time to those tasks considered managerial in nature (Hvidston, Range, McKim, & Mette, 2015). The definition for instructional leadership has evolved over time and is arguably the most important role principals have on their particular campus. According to The Room 241 Team (2013):

Instructional leadership involves setting clear goals, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and evaluating teachers regularly to promote student learning and growth. Quality of instruction is the top priority for the instructional principal. Instructional leadership is committed to the core business of teaching, learning, and knowledge. Staff members should meet on a regular basis to discuss how to do their jobs better and ultimately help students learn more effectively (para.3).

The Room 241 Team included four essential skills necessary for an instructional leader to be effective: (a) effective use

of resources, (b) communication skills, (c) serving as an instructional resource, and (d) being visible and accessible. However, according to Stronge (1988), only one-tenth of their time was devoted to being the instructional leaders on their campuses, while the remainder of the time a principal devoted to their job was spent on other tasks. Often, those tasks were managerial in nature.

As new principals navigated work environments, they found little time for cultivating strong instructional leadership. Novice principals also required an effective support system to become acclimated to his or her position. Allocating their time among multiple and complex responsibilities created a dilemma for newly appointed campus leaders due to a lack of preparation needed to adequately address instructional leadership. However, new principals regarded instructional leadership as valuable to their professional success (Hvidston et al., 2015).

Experienced Principal Perceptions

Although new principals and experienced principals approached the role of campus leadership differently, both groups were charged with improving student achievement. While novice principals struggled with finding the time to implement sound instructional leadership effectively, many experienced principals incorporated unique practices in order to find time to address teacher evaluation. Sodoma and Else (2009) found some experienced principals assigned low-level, non-instructional school tasks to secretaries. This provided the experienced principals more time to focus on improving instruction and providing effective feedback to teachers. Further research revealed that more experienced administrators reported higher gratification, personal achievement, and greater satisfaction with their school and community relationships than less experienced principals (Sodoma & Else, 2009).

In recent years, several educational studies have examined the perceptions of experienced principals regarding teacher evaluation and leadership needs. Results of these studies indicated that experienced principals required learning and growth opportunities in order to sustain them in their roles as campus leaders (Cardno & Youngs, 2013; Robertson, 2017). A recent qualitative study (Robertson, 2017) used a multiple case study approach to determine the factors that influenced professional identity. The summarized findings of the study indicated experienced principals consciously and continually manipulated their professional identity throughout their career. Key factors identified as contributing to principals' transformational identity included the capacity to express principles and beliefs and the ability to reflect on professional practice while maintaining peer role models and networks with other principals (Robertson, 2017).

Researchers have supported teacher evaluation procedures that enhanced the student learning experience (Fisher, 2013; Garubo & Rothstein, 1998). Mendels and Mitgang (2013) suggested that the conduit leading to principal progress was comprised of teacher and staff quality with an emphasis on persistent improvement, processes that ensured student learning, higher education and career readiness, prudence, stakeholder engagement, and the implementation of a clear school vision.

Principal Time Management

U.S. principals have been required to meet various accountability standards while inundated with internal and external job demands. These demands have required principals to balance around-the-clock access from stakeholders and supervisors, accompanied with the task of completing numerous job-related requirements such as teacher evaluations (Wells, 2013). These demands on the principal's time have impacted the principal's ability to build a positive school climate and improve teaching practices. Principals have been challenged to meet federal and state accountability standards while building or maintaining positive campus climate and staff morale (Drago-Severson, 2012). Ever increasing time-intensive workloads have challenged principals to find time to provide effective feedback to teachers.

Typically elementary school administrators have worked up to nine hours a day or more than 50 hours per week, while some secondary school principals reported working up to 70 hours per week on job-related tasks (Lunenburg, 2010; Wilson & Winn, 1980). During working hours, campus administrators filled this time with tasks such as parent, teacher, or student meetings, answering email, completing required paperwork, or other relevant tasks. Principals often experienced frequent interruptions such as unscheduled meetings or other types of disturbances. The average principal rarely had unstructured time and when unstructured time was available, the time was often filled with completing overdue tasks or other work-related requirements (Lunenburg, 2010).

Since the role of the principal has been dominated by administrative tasks and managing unscheduled events, little time remained for instructional leadership, professional development, and teacher evaluations (Hornig, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Leonard, 2010). Even though principals indicated teacher growth and feedback were essential to increasing student

performance, many campus administrators admitted to the abandonment of all but basic instructional leadership duties in order to address other competing tasks (Kersten & Israel, 2005; Kraft & Gilmore, 2017).

Population and Sample

Of the 784 elementary and middle/intermediate school principals in 64 T-TESS pilot school districts who were invited to participate in this study, 154 (20%) completed the online survey. All but two of the participants were teacher evaluators who were principals, or assistant principals; the two exceptions identified as “other” were supervisory staff certified by the State Board for Educator Certification who also had not been identified as teachers of record. (Texas Commissioner’s Rules Concerning Educator Appraisal, 2018b).

Table 1

Participant: Demographic Data

	%	<i>n</i>
1. Position		
Total Participants	100.0	154
Principal	60.4	93
Assistant Principal	38.3	59
Other	1.3	2
	%	<i>n</i>
2. Experience Level		
New Principal (1-3 Years)	29.9	46
Experienced Principal (4 or More Years)	70.1	108

Instrumentation

The standards-based survey instrument, the TEPT-TESS, and nine core interview questions solicited opinions and attitudes regarding T-TESS. The survey required evaluators to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with positive statements about T-TESS support activities.

The TEPT-TESS included 32 Likert-scale items with four response options, 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Agree*, and 4 = *Strongly Agree*. Seven items, numbered six through 12, measured respondents’ T-TESS value perceptions. Seven items, numbered 13 through 19, measured respondents’ T-TESS GSPD value perceptions. Ten items, numbered 20 through 29, measured respondents’ T-TESS system structure value perceptions.

The instrument was developed with input from 18 educational experts including campus administrators, principals, doctoral students, and doctoral candidates. The TEPT-TESS was drafted based on the theoretical framework presented in the literature review and questions adapted from the Louisiana Educators’ Perceptions of COMPASS survey (Auguste, 2015).

Data Collection Procedures

The principals were emailed information about the study’s purpose, process, and ethics. The researcher also requested their voluntary, confidential participation completing a brief survey linked to a second email sent five days later. The first email advised potential participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. This email also indicated the participants may also be asked for a follow-up personal interview. A link to SurveyMonkey was included in the email. Three subsequent emails were sent following the original email as reminders to those not responding.

Three principals were selected with the highest TEPT-TESS scores and three principals with the lowest TEPT-TESS scores, all of whom agreed to interviews by Skype or phone, whichever they preferred. The three principals with the highest and lowest scoring TEPT-TESS were selected to be interviewed in order to capture the participants thoughts and feelings

(Lichtman, 2006) and to uncover common threads/themes in the participants' responses. For each interview, nine core interview questions were asked pertaining to the T-TESS evaluation process.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

The TEPT-TESS collected quantitative data on principals' perceptions of the T-TESS process in the areas of value and GSPD. The descriptive statistics were calculated for the 154 respondents using SPSS. This included their item and total means, the standard deviations, and response percentage by item. Frequency distributions and response percentages by new and experienced principal classification were also calculated. Participant TEPT-TESS total scores determined their rank order for selecting interviewees who reported the most and least positive T-TESS perceptions.

An independent samples *t* test answered research question one (RQ1), was there a significant difference between new and experienced principals' perceptions of the T-TESS's value. An independent samples *t* test of four T-TESS mean scores answered research question one (RQ1) and research question two (RQ2) to determine if there were significant differences between new and experienced principals' perceptions of T-TESS's value and value of the GSPD. An independent *t* test compared mean scores of two groups to estimate sample variability (Rojewski, Lee, & Gemici, 2012).

Qualitative

Interview data answered research question three (RQ3): What were principals TEPT-TESS implementation perception? The information provided in the qualitative interviews was transcribed, sorted, coded, and organized using NVivo software. Open coding theory classified grouping and organized data into emerging themes and patterns (Lichtman, 2006) that were color-coded by question. A coding chart separated data into three informational categories: codes/nodes, themes, and supporting data. Using a constant comparison analysis method (Lichtman, 2006), data was matched from each interview using relevant data from other interviews in the same category. Captured data, codes/nodes in the first column were drawn from individual responses to specific interview questions. Axial coding identified relationships among open code groupings based on similar relationship and meaning. Responses entered in the third column provided supporting data for each theme. All data were organized based on frequency, participant reflection, or by experiences.

Results

Research Question 1

Although quantitative data revealed that elementary principals tended to disagree with the positive Perceived Value of T-TESS as a teacher evaluation system ($M = 2.8, n = 154$), statistical findings indicated both experienced and new principals agreed that T-TESS provided teachers with the information they needed to improve their instruction ($M = 3.1, n = 119$). This finding was in agreement with research which indicated the new Texas teacher evaluation system encouraged and promoted teaching and learning practices (TEA, 2014; 2016a; 2016c). When surveyed, 80.4% of new principals also agreed that T-TESS had shifted the mindset from compliance to offering specific feedback to teachers ($n = 37$). This finding was congruent with research that asserted the purpose of T-TESS was to provide teachers with specific job-related feedback to improve instructional practices (TEA, 2016a; 2016b). However, negative findings were also uncovered. Data found elementary principals disagreed with the statement, T-TESS is worth the amount of time it takes to complete ($M = 2.6; n = 75$ and both principal groups disagreed with the statement, I would choose to participate in T-TESS if it was not required ($M = 2.6, n = 84$). Lastly, an independent samples *t* test directly answered RQ1, Was there a difference in perceived value of T-TESS between new and experienced elementary school principals? Findings indicated there were no significant differences between new and experienced principals with regard to the perceived value of T-TESS, $t(143) = 1.2, p = .21$.

Although there were no significant differences between new and experienced principals regarding the perceived value of T-TESS, the findings within this study indicated that T-TESS proved valuable as an evaluation instrument to improve instruction and provide feedback to teachers. However, the time involved with implementing this system was disheartening and led some elementary principals to opt out when given the opportunity.

Research Question 2

Quantifiable statistical data indicated that elementary principals disagreed that the activities related to the GSPD dimension of T-TESS added value to this teacher evaluation system ($M = 2.9, n = 154$). Frequency distributions and percentage statistics from this section revealed elementary principals ($M = 3.1, n = 111$), and specifically new principals (88%, $n = 95$) were generally supportive of the T-TESS GSPD dimension. New principals also agreed that the feedback teachers received regarding the GSPD dimension led to personal growth in teachers (81.5%, $n = 88$). This statement was in direct agreement with the literature. Weisberg et al., (2009), firmly advocated using quality feedback to improve teacher practice. Experienced principals also indicated that through the T-TESS process, teachers self-reflected on teaching practices to improve their instructional effectiveness (78.8%, $n = 85$).

However, these results emerged on the low end of the findings: All principals ($M = 2.8; n = 113$), and especially experienced principals (28.7%, $n = 31$), did not believe that through the T-TESS goal setting and professional development process, teachers self-reflected on teaching practices to engage in continuous professional learning. Further, all principals ($M = 2.6; n = 106$), and specifically new principals (21.8%, $n = 10$), did not believe that through the T-TESS goal setting and professional development process, teachers used self-reflection to develop action plans for improvement. Also noteworthy, is the fact that only 63.6% of all principals would have chosen for their teachers to participate in the T-TESS GSPD dimension if it had not been required ($N = 154$). Lastly, a statistical analysis was utilized to uncover the differences between new and experienced principals. Findings from an independent samples *t* test concluded there were no significant differences between new and experienced principals regarding the GSPD dimension of T-TESS $t(143) = 1.3, p = .21$.

In summary, the data regarding this portion of study was supportive of the literature indicating that the goal setting and professional development dimension had been developed to support teacher growth throughout the evaluation process (TEA, 2016a; 2016b; 2016c). Quantitative findings indicated T-TESS was meeting expectations in supporting educators by providing a comprehensive goal setting and professional development system for teachers. Drago-Severson (2011), stressed the importance of this process by declaring educators needed to focus on teacher learning systems that supported teacher growth and development, and that developing such systems was an obligation that was owed to school leaders and teachers. Equally important, feedback opportunities provided by the T-TESS GSPD dimension adequately met educator needs. This proved to support the research that advocated for utilizing feedback to grow teachers. Effective feedback was essential to building highly efficacious teachers (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012). As a result, T-TESS seemed to provide an effective framework for administrators to grow and develop teachers by utilizing the GSPD dimension. Although these findings were uplifting, outcomes indicated that administrators were not as hopeful in the teacher self-reflection processes that were part of the T-TESS experience. However, this area was important and was promoted by TEA for self-reflection allowing a teacher to improve his or her own performance (TEA, 2016a; 2016b). This resulted in the empowerment of the teacher to take ownership for personal growth and development.

Research Question 3

Qualitative data collected through principal interviews provided a deeper perspective into RQ3, What are the implementation perceptions of campus elementary school principals utilizing T-TESS? In this phase of the study, four themes materialized regarding elementary principals' perceptions: the need for more training, an ongoing process, ownership of the process by both principals and teachers, and the time demands of the program.

More training

Principals indicated there was a need to provide additional teacher and administrator training in order to adequately transition to the new evaluation paradigm. Two subthemes contributed to this theme which included a need for understanding the mechanics of T-TESS process and being able to link T-TESS to everyday application. Understanding the mechanics of T-TESS referred to the provision of training in order to gain better knowledge regarding the basic processes, practices, techniques, and specifics of T-TESS. Principals reported that teachers had difficulty accepting the terms and processes of the program as adequate measures of teaching. Some teachers expected a higher grade other than "Rock Solid," although this was a proficient rating in T-TESS terminology and principals felt pressure to rate teachers higher than was deserved (Weisberg et al., 2009). To avoid an adoption of faulty evaluation habits, more training needed to be provided to change this thinking on the part of the teachers and to offer principals added support.

Ongoing journey

Educators view the T-TESS process as an on-going experience and not a one-time event. Three subthemes developed from this topic: supporting teacher growth and development, fostering collaborative relationships, and supporting self-reflection. Some principals reported that the T-TESS process encouraged teacher growth and development through goal-driven conversations and feedback. Research indicated that participation in feedback conversations related to instructional practices helped educators become aware of patterns and tendencies regarding personal teaching practices (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). This finding was in alignment with the purpose of T-TESS, which was to grow and develop teachers through on-going feedback (TEA, 2016b; 2016c). Research also indicated that building relationships where teachers and principals collaborated for school improvement proved beneficial (Cosner, 2009). Qualitative findings also found T-TESS helped foster deeper collaborative relationships between principals and teachers.

A final area uncovered by the data which indicated T-TESS was seen as an ongoing journey was found in the self-reflection component. The T-TESS process allowed teachers to reflect on personal teaching on an ongoing basis which was viewed as part of the evaluation journey. The self-reflection process encouraged teachers to make positive changes to their craft which led to positive outcomes (TEA, 2016a).

Ownership of the Process

This theme suggested both teachers and principals were in control of their T-TESS experience. The ownership of the T-TESS experience was derived from the amount of quality time, attention, and attitude placed on the instrument and feedback. To enhance the experience, principals were committed to a new paradigm of growing and developing teachers through such methods as coaching and offering specific and regular teacher feedback. Of equal importance, teachers have taken ownership of their evaluation journey and will reap the potential benefits of T-TESS by incorporating the feedback in their teaching.

Time Demands

This theme consisted of the time demands of T-TESS-related tasks that required the principal to implement the evaluation process with fidelity. Elementary principals cited tedious paperwork requirements, numerous observations and walkthroughs, and face-to-face feedback sessions as some of the burdens inherent to the evaluation instrument. Some principals described the T-TESS time commitments as overwhelming, disheartening, and frustrating.

Implications

Implications for Elementary School Principals

Results from this study yielded important implications for elementary school principals. First, providing additional and ongoing high-quality T-TESS training should be considered by for teachers by elementary school principals. Connecting gaps in knowledge and teacher training focused on common language, core processes, and methods to link T-TESS to everyday practice may help clarify teacher uncertainty for both teachers and administrators. Second, given that T-TESS is an instrument to support teacher growth and development, elementary campus principals should continue to seek effective systems and processes so quality and specific feedback may be provided. Providing specific teacher feedback is a key component to effective teacher evaluation (Weisberg et al., 2009). Third, so trust and respect for the teaching profession may be maintained, balanced feedback from principals must be provided to teachers in order to build quality relationships. Research has indicated that quality relationships supported learner outcomes and aided in establishing a positive learning environment (Divoll, 2010). Therefore, this seems to be an essential element that must be considered by principals when T-TESS processes are developed.

Implications for Central Office Personnel

A common understanding of district teacher evaluation expectations is required on the part of principals. Without this common understanding of what principals are expected to accomplish, principals are left to interpret T-TESS according to their preferences and schedule resulting in possibly compromising the fidelity of the instrument. Also, it is imperative to train new principals in the T-TESS process at a different level than experienced principals. Research indicated new principals focus more time on campus management and less time on instructional leadership (Hvidston et al., 2015); it is therefore recommended that more structured evaluation procedures and frequent follow-ups with new principals be provided. Lastly, T-TESS expects principals to grow and develop teachers; however, the reality is that time is keeping principals from meeting this expectation on

a consistent basis. Therefore, time management obstacles need to be identified and addressed by central office personnel supervising principals or by those overseeing the teacher evaluation process.

Recommendations for Future Research

There were two specific areas where future research would prove beneficial. A future study could strengthen this area of research by including teacher, lawmakers, and other stakeholder's perspectives. Examining the teacher perspective of T-TESS and aligning the perspectives, accomplishments, and concerns to those of campus principals would offer a more robust perspective and further insight into campus attitudes regarding teacher evaluation. In addition, a future study could expand the targeted population to include Texas secondary principal perspectives. This could include a focus on the 64 pilot districts or be expanded to include Texas regions according to their demographics, proximity, or size.

Conclusion

This study contributed to the body of literature supporting the use of teacher evaluation systems that provide feedback regarding instruction and using the feedback to promote ongoing professional development and improvement to the instructional practices of teachers. This study also provided support to the rationale provided by the Texas Education Agency regarding the T-TESS instrument. The notion that new elementary campus principals and experienced elementary campus principals differ in regard to the new standards-based teacher evaluation system in Texas in measuring teacher performance and growth is not supported by *t*-test data results. However, diverse tendencies contributing to the perceptions of these two principal groups were uncovered. For instance, most experienced principals believed T-TESS provided teachers with the information needed to improve their own instructional practices (80.5%, *n* = 87); however, most new principals believed T-TESS shifted the mindset from compliance to offering specific feedback to teachers (80.4%, *n* = 37). New and experienced principals also disagreed on the GSPD dimension. Findings indicated that the majority of experienced principals "Agree" that through the T-TESS process, teachers self-reflected on teaching practices to improve their instructional effectiveness (78.8%, *n* = 85). Meanwhile, the majority of new principals were in agreement with two findings: 1) the feedback teachers received regarding the GSPD dimension led to personal growth (80.4%, *n* = 37); and 2) most new principals were generally supportive of the T-TESS GSPD dimension (80.4%, *n* = 37). Moreover, factors contributing to the T-TESS perceptions of new principals mirrored the factors for experienced principals. However, one main inconsistency was the perception of T-TESS being a helpful and accepted teacher evaluation instrument. Both principal groups opposed and criticized T-TESS for the time the program took away from other responsibilities inherent in the performance of the role of their daily duties. If the Texas teacher evaluation system was intended to grow and develop teachers for the purpose of contributing to student growth, the educational community there is still work to be done in order to provide both teachers and principals with a compelling teacher evaluation experience.

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MODELING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS: USING TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

Modeling is an important instructional strategy that is employed in the EC-12 classroom, but is often missing from the collegiate classroom where preservice teachers are training to become those PK-12 teachers (Watson & Bradley, 2009). In an introductory education course, preservice teachers were given an assignment with few parameters. They were to use technology to define levels of Bloom's Taxonomy for a general audience. There were multiple purposes for this assignment. 1) For preservice teachers to have the ability to expand upon and demonstrate their knowledge of Bloom's Taxonomy; 2) to work at the synthesis level using technology; and 3) to have the opportunity to share their knowledge with a general audience of non-educators using "lay-language." This article details three different preservice teacher engagements with this assignment, their perceptions of their own learning and growth, and how they plan to use this in their future classrooms.

Keywords: modeling, instructional strategies, preservice teachers, technology in the classroom, student learning

Introduction

While in teacher education courses, preservice teachers are introduced to multiple instructional methodologies; however, in a majority of circumstances, they never have the opportunity to employ them. According to Watson and Bradley (2009), “In most teacher education courses, instructional strategies are merely listed and explained. Students rarely have the opportunity to see these strategies in use until they become student teachers. What better way to teach secondary instructional strategies to pre-service teachers than by modeling these strategies using teacher education content?” (p. 3). In an effort to enhance instructional pedagogy within an introductory education course, a teacher employed using multiple instructional techniques within the course while having the preservice teachers participate in these activities as both students and teacher. For one particular assignment, preservice teachers were given few parameters. They were to utilize technology to define levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy for a general audience. In this assignment, preservice teachers were expected to: expand upon and demonstrate their knowledge of Bloom’s Taxonomy; 2) work at the synthesis level using technology; and 3) share their knowledge with a general audience of non-educators without speaking in “teacherese.” This article follows four different preservice teachers as they work through this assignment. In addition, students’ unique perceptions of learning and growth are noted.

Review of Literature

The following review of literature will briefly explore three different facets of teacher education: 1) using Bloom’s Taxonomy in teacher education, 2) utilizing technology in education as a profession, and 3) sharing knowledge in teacher education in a manner easily understood by those outside the discipline. All three facets are examined through the lens of preservice teachers looking toward their future classrooms.

Bloom’s Taxonomy in Teacher Education

Bloom’s Taxonomy is a learning framework that was developed by a committee chaired by Dr. Benjamin Bloom in 1956. This hierarchical model is comprised of six domains: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Persaud, 2018). In 2001, a revised version of Bloom’s Taxonomy was published that renamed all six levels and reorganized the top two levels. The renaming moved from a noun based model to a verb based model. The revised models domains include: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. In both the original taxonomy and the revised taxonomy, the domains move from the concrete to the abstract or the simple to the complex (Armstrong, 2019). Building along these lines, the domains in both models are:

- *Knowledge/Remember*: The ability to recall information and processes. The students do not manipulate the information in any way. It is rote memorization. Some examples of this include citing definitions, memorizing facts and figures, and recognizing examples.
- *Comprehension/Understand*: The ability to demonstrate an understanding of the information presented. Students can transform, reorganize, or interpret the information. Some examples include explaining information in their own words, comparing information, and stating the main idea of material.
- *Application/Apply*: The ability to use information to solve a problem with one correct answer. The students can relate in the instruction to find a solution or an answer. Some examples include applying rules or formulas to solve problems, using acquired knowledge to investigate possible solutions, and demonstrating principles that have been taught.
- *Analysis/Analyze*: The ability to identify reasons and motives. The students can make inferences, analyze conclusions, and use critical thinking. Some examples include differentiating between facts and opinions, drawing conclusions based on experiments, and analyzing literature to make determinations.
- *Synthesis/Create*: The ability to create something new based on knowledge gained or learned. The students have the ability to use divergent and original thinking. Some examples include proposing ideas in an imaginary setting, designing something based on previous knowledge, or creating an original plan or story.
- *Evaluation/Evaluate*: The ability to judge the merits of ideas or information. The students can offer informed opinions or apply standards to make decisions. Some examples include judging other students creations, debating two sides of an argument, or offering an informed opinion about information that has been previously learned (Heick, 2018).

Technology in Teacher Education

Technology is being used daily in the EC-12 classroom, but not all teachers are using it in the same way (Friedman, 2019). Within teacher preparation programs, there is a continued push for the implementation of technology in teaching, but often it is done from a presentation standpoint where the teacher uses the technology, and not a learner standpoint where the

students engage with the technology for learning. This is being transferred to the schools and is most evident in low-income schools (Graves & Bowers, 2018). Teachers and teacher educators agree that technology integration is important in education, they often still struggle with how to do this. They are using technology for communication, personal, and often work submission purposes, but they have yet to apply technology to their teaching or for student learning (Alenezi, 2017; McVee, Bailey, & Shanahan, 2008). This is for a multitude of reasons from including comfort level, planning time, security restrictions, and lack of resources. Additionally, the EC-12 classrooms are often ahead of university classrooms in their technology capabilities. This makes it difficult at times for university faculty to model appropriate EC-12 classroom technology within the confines of the university.

Utilizing Technology in the Profession

Daily, the landscape of education and technology is evolving. As technology infiltrates all aspects of both the education profession and teacher education specifically, there is often a fear by teacher educators that pedagogical practices that do not involve technology will be lost and/or forgotten. (Oriji & Amadi, 2016). It is imperative that preservice teachers are exposed not only to the best integrative practices of instruction and technology; but also to the potential impact the effective use of technology will have on the academic success of their future students. “Effective teaching requires not only mastery of the subject content, pedagogical techniques, and technological affordances, but also how to achieve a successful dynamic interaction between those three factors” (Crompton, 2015, p. 82).

Sharing Knowledge in Teacher Education

Educators often have their own language known more commonly as “educationese” (Nemko, 2016). Just as with doctors, where often patients cannot understand what is being said to them (Lin, 2011), teachers often have the same problem when they use educational jargon when speaking to parents or to the general public. When educationese is used, it is possible that other educators may not understand what is being said. Although terms such as differentiation, pedagogy, formative assessment, authentic assessment, data-driven, scaffolding, etc. are important to student success, do all educators put the same meaning on these terms? To further complicate matters, it should be noted, there are multiple websites dedicated to explaining educationese or educational jargon; not all of which agree on the meanings of such words.

Teaching preservice educators to use educational jargon appropriately within educational settings is important. It is language that helps educators to more distinctly define what they are saying (Heick, 2018). The concern is that educators can only converse with other educators when using this type of jargon. It is imperative that educators are able to communicate with parents and the general public about education in a manner and through a language that is clearly understood. Therefore, teachers should be able to give those outside the discipline meanings of educational jargon in known terms. When educational terms are used, clear definitions and explicit examples will help ensure all stakeholders are accurately informed. (Heick, 2018).

Assignment Participation

Subsequent to instruction on Bloom’s Taxonomy (using classroom techniques and activities at the knowledge/remember; comprehension/understand; application/apply; and analysis/analyze levels), preservice teachers were asked to express their knowledge at the synthesis/create level. Preservice teachers were given very few parameters for the assignment. The instructions for this assignment were left intentionally vague, giving the preservice teachers the opportunity to expand and explore the assignment. Partnered with a colleague pursuing a similar certification field, dyads were told to find a way to teach Bloom’s Taxonomy to a lay person. Each team was to cover all six levels, define all six levels, and produce a video to demonstrate each level. They then presented their videos to the class. During each presentation, the other preservice teachers in the class were asked to evaluate each presentation. The evaluation was conducted via a rubric that each member of the class was completed. The purpose of this aspect of the assignment was to “force” the preservice teachers to examine the videos from both a synthesis/create level and evaluation/evaluate level.

The following four exemplars were prepared by undergraduate, preservice teachers after participating in this assignment. Each exemplar addressed: 1) what they did within the parameters of the assignment; and 2) what they learned from participating in the assignment. (Please note the writing and voice of the exemplars are the students’ own words).

Exemplar 1

As a preservice teacher, we walk a very thin line between being a teacher and still being a college student. Therefore,

we are in that place of learning “educationese” while also feeling sometimes like the confused parent trying to track what a teacher is saying. However, in our education course, we have used a Bloom’s Taxonomy project to bridge the gap between learning something and teaching something.

What I did in the process.

At first, Bloom’s Taxonomy was just a term used to provide knowledge to us as college students entering the field of education. Instead of simply reading from a textbook or listening to a lecture on Bloom’s Taxonomy, we were given instructions to take what we knew and develop a video to teach our peers and others about Bloom’s Taxonomy. We then evaluated our peers on their presentations and teaching, while at the same time reflecting on our own work throughout this process.

The Bloom’s Taxonomy video project highly appealed to my right-brained personality and I was eager to get started, to show my peers my work; and more importantly, see their work. I was able to choose the technology I wanted to use and the style in which I wanted to present it. The video I created defining Bloom’s Taxonomy allowed me to take what I learned and teach it to others by sharing it. Through scenes from *Grey’s Anatomy* and the iMovie App, I was able to explain the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. My fellow peers provided other ways to explain and present it through their own videos. Individually and collectively, we were able to take ideas, extend upon ideas, discuss each other’s ideas and grow.

Completing this video allowed me to be a college student synthesizing Bloom’s Taxonomy through while at the same time, being a teacher as I shared it with my peers for evaluation. Additionally, I was able to look through the lens of a parent (who was perhaps less familiar with the “educationese” of Bloom’s) as they might learn to understand Bloom’s Taxonomy in layman’s terms. In other words, projects like this helped me bridge the learning gap between my current role as a college student and my future role as a classroom teacher.

What I learned from the process.

The most important thing that I learned was that simply being given content does not mean something has been truly learned. On Day 1, if my professor had given me the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy and instructed me to “know” them because they would be asked on a test, I would have memorized the information and even told myself I had learned what Bloom’s Taxonomy is. However, I do not feel that I truly learned Bloom’s Taxonomy until I *did* Bloom’s Taxonomy. As new educators, I believe it is imperative to understand ALL levels of Bloom’s. We cannot stand at the front of the classroom and project terms and ideas onto a whiteboard and claim that our students “have it”. The lower levels of Bloom’s are necessary to build a solid foundation, but remaining there will never provide my students the confidence they need to excel.

Additionally, I learned that yes, Bloom’s Taxonomy has a set hierarchy; however, I do not believe the steps necessarily need to be followed in order. With this specific project, the synthesis level came after knowledge. Once I was able to create from what I knew, I was able to comprehend the process better and see the importance of scaffolding skills. Bloom’s Taxonomy is a model and method for instruction but despite its published research, wide usage and popularity, it is not a set-in-stone, one-way method, but it does work well when all levels are used.

In 2019, technology is not only a luxury, but it is also a necessity. In a technology-driven society, preservice and current teachers cannot escape the reality that technology integration is important to the learning process. Having technology present in the classroom, however, does not mean technology is being integrated for learning purposes. I have been present in college courses where technology has only been used to give information (i.e. document cameras and PowerPoint presentations). I have also been in grade-school classrooms where technology again is only being used to present information, or worse, used to occupy students (i.e. games). Technology integration is not a replacement of the teacher or the teaching being done in the classroom, but rather it is something implemented as a tool to enhance a student’s learning and engage them. For teachers, this means teaching our students safe ways to apply or further their learning with technological tools.

For the project, I completed in my college-level course on Bloom’s Taxonomy, I was not given any specifics on what technology to use, but only told it had to be a video format. Interestingly, many of my peers and myself used a variety of technology applications and tools in the videos we created. Some students used tools that allowed for interaction throughout the presentation, some had apps that sped up or slowed down specific parts of the video, some used phones, some used laptops, etc. What I learned from this is that, again, students think differently. If teachers allow their students to use technology—something they are naturally intrigued by—to take their learning to a deeper level, students will amaze us in ways we might not even expect! In addition, technology provides a way for students to illustrate their knowledge.

Lastly, an important factor I learned from working with technology is that I have to accept the fact that technology is always changing. I am not familiar or comfortable with all tools or methods of technology. Therefore, it is important to me to be willing to read up on and try out new technologies not only for my own use, but to safely introduce it to my students as well.

Exemplar 2

What I did in the process.

During this course, I have realized that not only do I have to think as a student but as a teacher as well. For my Bloom's Taxonomy project, my partner and I decided to make a video using Imovie. Imovie is a video editing software provided by Apple for their products. In this video, we knew that one of the objectives we wanted to incorporate was pop culture. Pop culture is something that I wanted to incorporate because children are able to be more focused and interested. After going through many shows we finally agreed upon "The Bachelorette."

Making our video have examples of Bloom's Taxonomy for the general public to understand was a prominent key for my partner and I. Once we accumulated all of the video clips that we needed, the next step was to put them together to make our final video. Thinking that this was going to be the easiest part of our project we began the process of using Imovie. However, we came to a quick realization that we had no idea how to use a video editing software. Personally speaking, I use technology on an everyday basis, which made me believe that I was highly familiar with technology. The first mistake we made was recording the video clips we needed on a non-apple product. After understanding our first dilemma we recorded our video clips again on an Iphone which would then be sent to my Macbook. Soon after uploading all of our videos to Imovie we were able to add freeze frames in which we would add all of the descriptions of the video clips for each stage. After hours of working on the video, I finally had our final product for the Bloom's Taxonomy project. The only thing left to complete our project was trying to sort out how we were going to present our video if Imovie was not a software which is usable on many computers.

What I learned from the process.

While doing this project, I gained a lot of experience. Learning about how limited my knowledge was on technology was an eye-opener. My partner and I learned that Imovie was a good video editing software program. Although the trouble we had was with uploading the video onto a site where we could show our video. We later figured out that Youtube was the best place to upload our video.

When it came time for the viewing of everyone's videos, I instantly became aware of many things I could have done differently. Unfortunately, I realized that although my partner and I did give examples of each level we did not give an explanation of the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy in our video project. Despite the fact that I realized what I did wrong, in that moment it was a great experience to understand what I could do better next time, or in the future. I have learned that it is imperative for preservice teachers to know the correct terminology and explanations for each level. In addition, it is important to learn how to interpret the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy for people, parents essentially, in lay-terms.

Additionally, when the last group presented their video project in Spanish, I came to a realization that I had never had someone explain any teacher terminology in Spanish or another language. As a parent who does not fully understand English, being presented with "educationese" can be extremely overwhelming not only for the parent but the student as well. For example, a bilingual child many times finds themselves trying to translate what their teacher or anyone is trying to say to their parents or guardian. As a young child translating words or phrases that even they have not heard is something very difficult to deal with, creating anxiety and potentially raising their affective filter. This project enlightened the lack of explanations we have, over what we are trying to or will be trying to convey, in another language.

Exemplar 3

What we did in the process.

For our Bloom's Taxonomy project, the pair of us elected to take a risk by choosing a technology tool we were unfamiliar with - Pear Deck. Pear Deck is an educational technology tool that engages students by allowing them to interact with PowerPoint slides that the educator controls. The students' interactions are viewable only to the educator. The instant feedback from students when using Pear Deck advises the educator of how well the students are grasping the material based on their responses.

As we began to navigate the features of Pear Deck, we discovered that we were able to incorporate activities with each of the stages of Bloom's Taxonomy. Because we chose Pear Deck as our technology tool, we chose our theme of the project to be pears. We explained each tier of the Bloom's Taxonomy through video, and we followed up with activities for each one.

- For the knowledge stage, we asked a basic question to the students: "What is a pear?" Following the question was a set of three answer choices the students could select: "Fruit", "Vegetable", or "Neither". We received instant feedback from the students, and we quickly reviewed their responses before moving onto the next stage of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- For the comprehension stage, we wanted to observe if the students understood the life of a pear. We asked the students to complete a matching activity where they were instructed to connect a line from the term to its proper stage of life. For example, the "seed" of the pear was to be matched to "the first stage". We received the interactions and moved onto the application stage.
- For the application stage, our activity was to allow the students to implement a plan for how they intend to grow and care for a pear tree. Some of the responses we were searching for included: knowing when to harvest the pear, gathering materials, preparing the soil, carefully planting the seed in a pot, watering the seed, and transporting the seed to well-soiled ground for further growth, water, and sunlight. Once we gathered and viewed the responses, we introduced our analysis activity.
- For the analysis stage, the students were instructed to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between two types of pears: an Anjou pear, and a Bosc pear. The students could simply type in their answers under each compare and contrast column. We were searching for responses regarding the pears' size, shape, color, or any other features the students could identify.
- Next, we entered the synthesis stage where students are encouraged to create something new. Our idea was to ask the students to invent their own pear sauce. We provided a brain map for the students to type in flavors and measurements they wanted to use to make their pear sauce.
- The last stage of Bloom's Taxonomy is evaluation. We asked our audience to evaluate and critique their peers' pear sauce recipes.

What we learned from the process.

A valuable takeaway from this process is that the lower-level cognitive skills prepare the platform for building higher-order thinking. Our professor taught Bloom's Taxonomy by mirroring each of the Bloom's Taxonomy stages. She allowed us to first become comfortable with basic terms and definitions before playing with them and dissecting their different parts. When we became familiar with understanding the terms, applying them in situations, and analyzing them, she allowed us to experiment with them and produce something original through the use of technology.

Another valuable takeaway from this process was when the synthesis level was reached, students provided a multitude of ideas for tackling the same task. Each group offered fresh suggestions of how to teach Bloom's Taxonomy with technology, and as a result, stretched and expanded our intelligence in the synthesis level itself. Overall, we have learned that introducing the very basic levels of learning and expanding on them can result in acquiring deeper levels of cognitive skills.

Exemplar 4

What we did in the process.

In this assignment, we chose to create our video using our phones because we know that in this age of technology most students have access to a phone. We created a video using two applications and the camera on our phone. The first technology application used was Hyperlapse which allowed us to take several pictures and create a time-lapse video of the artwork. We also went on a scavenger hunt on campus to find several students and professors that would participate in each of the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. We recorded our interaction with them using the camera. We also used the camera to take photographs of our definitions and explanations. The second application we used was iMovie where we compiled all of our pictures and videos to create our presentation. Since iMovie is an Apple application, we chose to upload our presentation to a private YouTube channel so that it could be played on any electronic device.

Our presentation was titled "Bloom's Taxonomy Explained: The Pencil Edition." We walked through the six levels of Bloom's in order from the knowledge level up to the evaluation level. We initially defined each level of Bloom's using layman's language that was easier to understand, rather than "teacherese." Then we moved on to a video in which we asked a person a question, or we actively demonstrated an activity, that was appropriate for each level. We closed each section with an

explanation of why it was an example of that level so that a non-teacher would have a clear understanding of it. When there was no speaking we chose to play an easy jazz that was fun to listen to and engages the mind.

- The first level of Bloom's Taxonomy is knowledge. We showed a professor a pencil and asked "What is this called?" She replied, "A Pencil". Then the explanation that followed was they recalled the name of the pencil and did not need to research it.
- The second level of Bloom's is comprehension. We asked a student "What are some uses for a pencil?" She gave us examples of writing a story, writing a letter, drawing, and taking notes. The explanation that followed stated that they understand the "how" to use the pencil.
- For application, we asked a student to write their name. We then explained they can only write one answer because that is their name.
- For the analysis level, we asked several people "If I were to give you this pencil, how would you use it?" This section had many answers: write a letter to their son, doodling, making a list of the most interesting things they had seen today, taking notes, solving math problems, write a letter to their sister, and write a story. After each answer we showed a brief video showing someone doing these things. Then at the end of these we explained as shown there are many answers to how they would use the pencil because it is based on their desires.
- The fifth level of Bloom's taxonomy is synthesis. We used a time-lapse video of an original piece of artwork being created using a pencil for the entire thing.
- For the final level, evaluation, we used an argument that we still need a pencil today because there are so many ways to use it.

What we learned from the process.

We learned to get out of our comfort zone by seeking people outside of our class for help with the project. We also discovered that it is fine to be told no and to work with what you have. We found that by working at the synthesis and evaluation levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, we were able to develop a deeper understanding of each level and how to explain them, as well as how to demonstrate them. These tools will be very helpful when we get into the classroom, in writing lesson plans, and as we execute the lessons with our students.

Additionally, we discovered that we cannot always speak in "teacherese," but that we must also translate in such a way that parents are able to understand and follow their student's progress. Effective communication is essential to building strong parent-teacher, student-teacher, and parent-student relationships. We need to understand that most parents we speak to are not fellow teachers, therefore communication needs to be clear and on a level that they understand. If we constantly use technical talk and teacher acronyms during meeting the parents may struggle and become confused with what we are trying to express. Even if they should know what the acronyms stand for, they may not fully understand what they mean. We as educators and future educators have to keep this in mind when talking with parents. We need to help them understand what we are saying so that we can share in the mission of what is best for their child. This also applies towards our students, as we must make sure the activities done and the language used is developmentally appropriate. The language used for a kindergartner would differ from the language used with a high-schooler or college student. We need to make sure our students are grasping what is being taught.

Implications for Further Research and Conclusions

Future research could be done examining the potential impacts this assignment will have on preservice teachers when they move into the EC-12 classroom. Additional research might also follow these preservice teachers into their future classrooms to see how and when they use the methodologies taught through this assignment as well as the impact these teaching methods have on preservice teacher instructional pedagogical knowledge.

Modeling instructional pedagogies for the preservice teachers in university teacher education classrooms is an important aspect of helping preservice teachers internalize authentic pedagogical behaviors before they enter into their future EC-12 classrooms (Watson & Bradley, 2009). Within university teacher education classrooms, instructional strategies are often discussed, but preservice teachers may not have the explicit instruction in how to use them or even had the opportunity to explore and participate in them as students and as teachers. By giving preservice teachers the opportunity to experience a synthesis/create level activity as a student as well as using it as a teacher to share information with non-educators, these preservice teachers gained the experience in using this teaching methodology first hand. Additionally, they gained additional work in presenting educational information to a non-educational population. When moving into the EC-12 classroom, this experience will not only help them with instructional strategies but will also help them learn important communication methods

for speaking about educational topics with parents and the public in lay terms.

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PRESERVICE TEACHER FIELD TRIPS: OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE SCHOOLS IN HIGH-NEEDS CONTEXTS

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Abstract

This research study investigates the impact of having preservice teachers participate in a field trip to visit urban and diverse schools early in their preparation program. Through analysis of post-field trip survey responses, we found that the majority of participants reported a positive change in their perspectives on teaching in diverse and urban schools. Additionally, through coding of their open-ended responses, we identified key components of the experience that were impactful: opportunities to observe teaching and learning in a classroom setting; being exposed to a new, more diverse school context; and gaining knowledge about the innovative programs and job opportunities offered by the districts. Findings suggest that similar experiences such as school visits could positively impact preservice teachers' perceptions and have implications for teacher recruitment for diverse and urban schools.

Keywords: preservice teachers, field trips, high-needs contexts

Introduction

Teacher shortages are an important issue facing schools – especially in urban, high-needs districts (Ingersoll, 2003; Simon & Johnson, 2015). As school districts look to address these teacher shortages, many have been forced to expand their recruitment efforts beyond job postings and career fairs (O'Neil & Richards, 2018; Spradlin & Prendergast, 2006) and have resorted to raising teacher starting pay or offering other financial incentives, though the effectiveness of these methods is still in question (Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004). Partnerships with teacher preparation institutions could assist these districts in increasing access to a higher number of qualified candidates (Maier & Youngs, 2009), but preservice teacher (PST) attitudes towards working in high-needs schools are difficult to overcome (Hornig, 2009). Boyd and associates (2013) found that teachers largely preferred more suburban, more affluent, and less diverse settings that were located closer to their home. To increase the likelihood that PSTs might consider working in their schools, high-needs districts should consider providing opportunities for PSTs from local universities to experience teaching and learning in the context of their schools.

This study explores one such experience with PSTs from a large, public university in Central Texas and a nearby large, urban school district. We surveyed PSTs towards the beginning of their preparatory program, after they had the opportunity to visit schools in this district to observe students and teachers in classroom settings. The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) Does a field trip experience to an urban, diverse school change PST perceptions on wanting to teach in similar settings?
- 2) What are the most meaningful aspects of a field trip experience for PSTs?

Literature Review

Teacher shortages are felt unevenly across school contexts, as schools with higher percentages of non-white students and low-income students have disproportionately more vacancies than their counterparts (Ingersoll, 2001; Simon & Johnson,

2015). These diverse and underserved schools are typically found in urban areas and often have higher rates of teacher turnover (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Rice, 2013). This turnover creates opportunities for novice educators seeking a place to begin their teaching careers. Unfortunately, many of these teachers who choose to take their first jobs in high-needs contexts will soon leave these schools in search for positions that more closely match their preferences (Jacob, 2007).

An important aspect of these PST preferences that is heavily influenced by both school context and geography is the demographic make-up of the student population. While the single largest group of teachers remains white and female, the national student population is growing more racially and ethnically diverse (Boser, 2014; Goodwin, 2017). Contributing to the phenomenon of teacher-student racial mismatch is the growing geographic segregation of American communities along ethnic lines (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). Consequently, it is becoming less likely for PSTs to have attended ethnically diverse schools and they may feel increasingly less comfortable teaching in the more diverse context of many high-needs schools. Since PSTs tend to prefer to work in schools with contexts similar to those they attended as PK-12 students (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005), school districts must find ways to overcome this teacher discomfort and their preference for schools that more closely align with their own educational experiences if they wish to recruit and retain their teachers at higher rates.

Some high-needs districts have sought to disrupt patterns of understaffing and low-retention by offering incentives to entice teachers into taking jobs at their schools, but the effectiveness of these measures has been unconvincing (Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004). Many hiring incentive programs offer monetary bonuses or student loan forgiveness (Aragon, 2018). However, such programs often do not significantly lessen the retention of teachers, which then leaves teacher turnover unaddressed (Berry, 2004; Fowler, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003). For example, Feng (2014) revealed that while raising teacher base pay could help to increase the likelihood of teachers remaining in their schools, the financial incentives of the amount necessary to address the problem of teacher attrition would be cost-prohibitive for many high-needs districts. Additional research has revealed that most monetary incentives are largely unproven in attracting high-quality teachers (McEwan, 1999; Milanowski et al., 2009). Additionally, teachers' financial considerations primarily impact their initial decision to enter the teaching profession, not which schools an educator might choose to teach (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). Therefore, if financial incentive programs are largely ineffective and prohibitively expensive, school districts should investigate alternative methods for attracting and then retaining qualified teachers.

An example of a non-financial method that can aide recruiting and subsequently retaining teachers is the formation of partnerships between teacher preparation institutions and school districts. As previously stated, these relationships can open pipelines of recruitment that can help fill teaching vacancies (Maier & Youngs, 2009). School districts partnered with teacher preparation institutions typically make their schools available as host sites for PST classroom observations, short-term practice teaching, or longer-term clinical teaching assignments. These formalized experiences are well-established aspects of many PST preparation programs, but some high-needs schools either lack partnerships with institutions or struggle to entice PSTs to choose their campuses as sites for those experiences. The establishment of less formal preservice experiences for PSTs might impact their comfort levels with the context of the high-needs schools. This increased comfort level should help PSTs feel more at home within the context of a high-need school, which could help to decrease teacher mobility (Liu & Johnson, 2006) and increase clinical teaching assignments on one of their campuses. Furthermore, PSTs can be more effective when their full-time teaching assignment matches the context of their clinical teaching assignment (Haberman & Post, 1998; Goldhaber, Krieg, & Theobald, 2017). Therefore, since the location of clinical teaching assignments is impactful on their eventual full-time teaching assignment, it is critical for high-needs schools that PSTs experience the context of their schools early in their preservice preparation program.

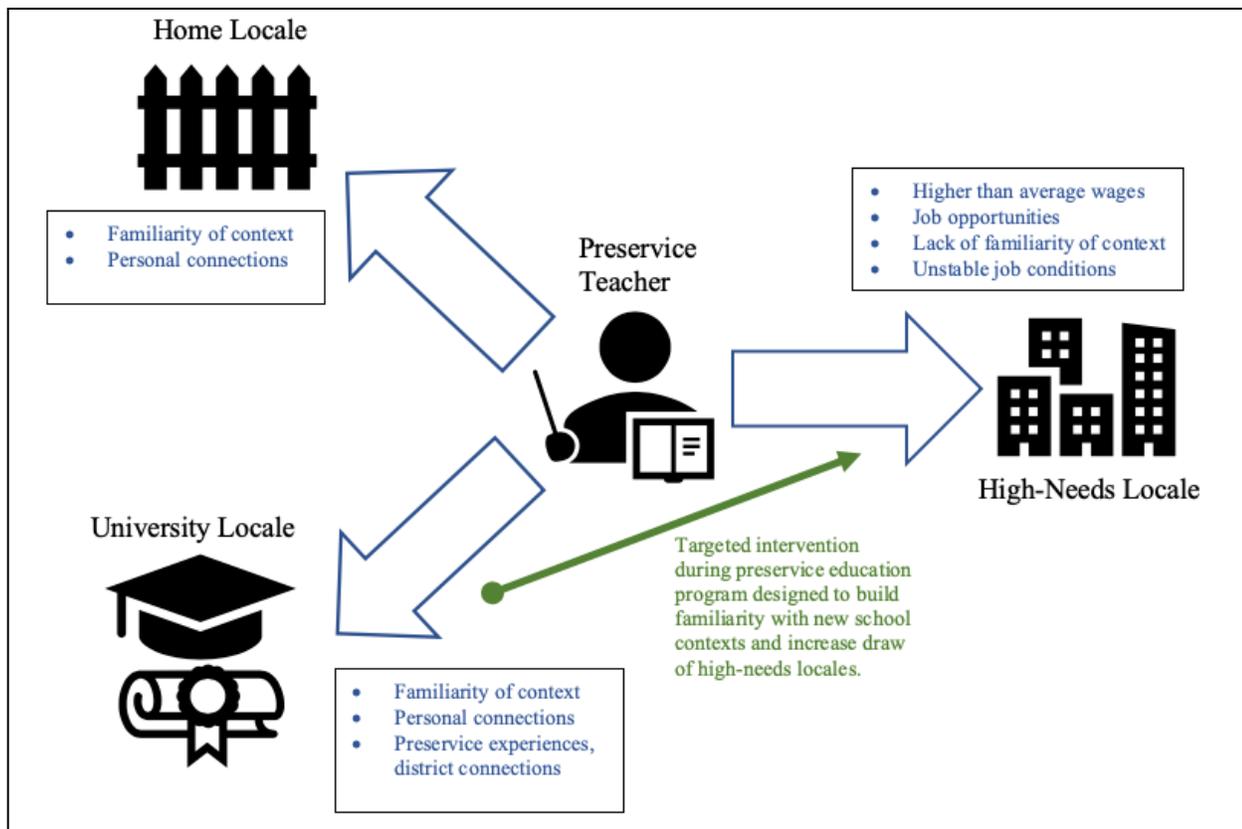
Conceptual Model

Experiential interventions that expose PSTs to new school contexts during their preservice education program have been shown to impact the way they view their profession and students (Lamote & Engles, 2010). This exposure could help teachers adjust more quickly to the context of their new school – and this enculturation process has been identified as one of the largest problems facing new teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). With the learning curve for beginning teachers already incredibly steep, additional hurdles placed in the path of teachers, such as learning a new campus culture, can further burden these novices as they attempt to start their careers. Experiences designed to introduce PSTs to high-needs schools may not need to be long in duration to overcome unfamiliarity with the school context, as research has shown that the length of a clinical teaching experience is not a significant predictor of impact (Chambers & Hardy, 2005; Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). Therefore, this study theorizes that allowing PSTs to experience teaching and learning in the contexts of a high-needs school early in their preservice preparation program might increase the likelihood that they would return to schools in a similar context for their

clinical or full-time teaching.

The following conceptual model is proposed to explain factors influencing the job decisions of a typical PST (Figure 1). The model situates the PST at the center of the frame presented with the choice of three primary locales in which to teach: 1) the home locale, 2) the locale surrounding the university they attended, or 3) the locale of a high-needs school. For the purpose of this model, the term “locale” refers to areas of similar geographic features such as urbanicity and physical setting; human aspects such as population racial and socioeconomic composition; and cultural aspects such as language and customs. PSTs’ choices of locale are presented as three large arrows linking the teacher in the center of the model with either their home locale, the university locale, or the locale of the urban school. Each of the three locales has certain factors that impact whether PSTs choose to work there and these are summarized below.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Factors Affecting Teacher Job Choices



Home Locale. Home locales are appealing for PSTs because they often contain connections to friends and family members who may still reside in that geographic area. More generally, PSTs might be drawn to teach in a setting that contextually resembles their home locale. For example, PSTs tend to be interested in similarly sized and situated communities or communities with similar cultural aspects. When Boyd and associates (2013) examined PST school choices in New York, they uncovered that geographic distance from their hometown played a significant role in how teachers selected their schools. They discovered that the familiarity of the home locale is a powerful pull-factor for teachers and that their choices on where to teach were impacted by aspects of setting such as student demographics and urbanicity.

University Locale. The locale surrounding the university the PST attended was also found to be significantly important in choosing where to work, but less so than the home locale (Boyd et al., 2013). One additional benefit of the university setting is the presence of field experiences, which can build a sense of familiarity with particular school contexts and help PSTs feel more inclined to teach full-time in a similar context (Goldhaber et al., 2017).

High-needs locale. The locale of the high-needs school may not share many contextual similarities to that of the PSTs’ home or university, making it appear less attractive for a first teaching job. Typically, these high-needs schools feature student

populations that are less white and less affluent than their suburban or rural counterparts (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014). While school districts in these locales do have numerous job opportunities for novice teachers with high starting pay rates (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007), these schools can be difficult to keep fully staffed (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Schools in urban settings have higher percentages of students of color and higher percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch assistance (Ng, 2003). They also often suffer from higher teacher turnover rates than their more affluent and less diverse suburban counterparts (Simon & Johnson, 2015). As a result, they must rely on new hires to fill their vacancies each school year. This staff instability can contribute to problems such as lower student achievement (Henry, Fortner, & Bastian, 2012) and poorly managed classrooms (Headden, 2014). These factors can create a very unstable work environment which fuels the cycle of novice replacement and additional teacher turnover.

Targeted Intervention. The last feature of the model is a targeted intervention, represented in Figure 1 by a smaller arrow bridging the space between the university and high-needs locales. This intervention introduces the PST to the locale of the high-needs school in hopes that they might choose to conduct their clinical teaching or teach full-time in schools within similar contexts. Due to the timing of these interventions prior to clinical teaching, they would most likely be short in duration and frequency, although it is hypothesized that increasing time spent in a high-needs context would have a greater effect on PST attitudes.

There are some PSTs who are familiar with the locales of the high-needs school and return to take jobs there, but they alone will not be sufficient to staff all of the open positions (Liu, Rosenstein, Swan, & Khalil, 2008). Surely, schools in these high-needs locales must seek to address their shortages of teachers in a multitude of ways. Grow-your-own teacher programs and the targeted recruitment of PSTs from the locales of the needy district (Milanowski et al., 2009) could prove to be partial remedies, but it is hypothesized that rerouting some of the teacher supply to high-needs districts through intervention experiences could be another promising solution. The study, as described below, incorporated a targeted intervention that might help increase the likelihood that PSTs might choose to clinical teach or full-time teach in a high-needs locale.

Methods

The department of teacher education at a large public university in Central Texas takes PSTs on a field trip to visit schools in a nearby large, urban school district. This experience is intended to help PSTs feel more open to the possibility of clinical teaching (which PSTs submit their preferences) or, upon graduation, teaching full-time for this school district. These field trips are taken once per semester by PSTs enrolled in a junior-level teaching methods course which is typically taken at the beginning of their certification program. The trip lasts the majority of one day with travel consisting of roughly three hours round-trip. Upon their arrival at the school sites, PSTs are given a guided tour of the campus and encouraged to spend time in classrooms observing teachers and students. Depending on the campus, PSTs are able to observe multiple classes of students and speak to several in-service teachers. They are also given a short presentation by campus administration which highlights district and campus programs and opportunities for future employment.

After the field trip, a short survey is distributed electronically to learn about PST perceptions of the school and the high needs school context as possible destinations for clinical and full-time teaching. Of the 225 students who received the survey link following their field trip in the spring of 2019, 68 students completed the survey. This response rate of 30 percent was not ideal, but robust enough to allow for preliminary analyses. The survey consisted of four items: one multi-part Likert-type scale question and three open-ended response questions meant to gather information about aspects of the trip they liked, did not like, or needed to be improved upon. The Likert-type scale item measured the effects of the field trip on PST perspectives about either clinical or full-time teaching in the participating school district or another district with a similar context. It was coded with 1 representing that the field trip definitely did not change their perspectives and 5 representing that the field trip definitely did change their perspectives.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the multiple-choice items and the open-ended questions were thematically coded. Qualitative analysis of the three open-ended response items yielded themes which were then used to code the responses for all three items (Merriam, 2009). Student responses were double-coded as needed.

Results

PST responses are summarized in Table 1. Affirmative responses were those indicating that the field trip “probably” or “definitely” did change their perspectives (4 or 5 on the Likert scale). With over 60 percent of participants indicating that the

field trip changed their perspective on teaching in an urban or diverse setting, data indicates that this experience shaped PST attitudes. Additionally, the experience of visiting the K-12 campuses had a greater impact on perspectives on teaching in a diverse setting than an urban setting. However, it is also clear that there was no substantial impact on perspectives about wanting to teach in a clinical or full-time capacity in the school district specifically.

Table 1

Summary of Responses to Survey Item Q1 (N=68)

Did the trip to the school campuses change your perspective about...	Percent of affirmative responses	Mean
...teaching in an urban setting?	62%	3.53
...teaching in a diverse setting?	71%	3.79
...clinical teaching in the district?	26%	2.44
...full-time teaching in the district?	22%	2.43

Participant responses to the open-ended survey questions were coded and then sorted into themes that emerged during the initial coding process (Saldana, 2015). Four major themes were retained and are listed in Table 2. For what participants liked about the field trip, respondents wrote positively about how the experience allowed them to observe teaching and student learning in actual classroom settings, provided them with a chance to see what a more diverse school setting looks like, and informed them of programs and opportunities offered to students and teachers in the district. In listing what they did not like about the field trip and suggesting how it be improved, the most common topic written about was regarding the trip transportation and other travel-related difficulties. Additionally, many students remarked that they would have liked to have spent more time observing teachers and students in the classrooms or have an opportunity to visit a different campus.

Table 2

Qualitative Themes from Open-Ended Response Survey Items Q2, Q3, and Q4

Theme	Frequency			Total (Percent)
	Q2: Likes	Q3: Dislikes	Q4: Suggestions	
Importance of time to observe students and teachers in a classroom setting.	28	12	14	54 (34%)
Seeing new or more diverse school environments.	19	6	11	36 (22%)
Informed about school programs and opportunities.	10	0	0	10 (6%)
Negative reactions to trip organization.	0	38	23	61 (38%)

PSTs valued their time in classrooms seeing teaching and learning happen and even asked for more observation time in many of their comments about suggested improvements. As one participant stated, "I liked that we got to spend several hours in the classroom with the students and teacher. The teacher also let us help the students while they were working!" (Respondent 5). Additionally, another participant said, "I liked how we were able to actually be in a classroom setting, even if it was just for a day!" (Respondent 11). PSTs appreciated the chance to see what classroom teaching and student learning looked like in these school contexts. Of the 161 coded statements drawn from the responses, over a third (34 percent) referenced time spent observing students and teachers in a classroom setting as an aspect of the trip for which they were thankful.

Participants also highlighted their appreciation for a chance to see a new and more diverse school setting on the field trip (36 statements, 22 percent). One PST said, "I liked getting to be immersed within a school that was so different than my personal experiences." (Respondent 14). As noted earlier, these PSTs largely come from schools much different than those found in urban school districts, so this field trip was a chance to introduce them to different contexts. For instance, one student said they appreciated "the experience of seeing a big school, because I'm from a small town." (Respondent 27).

Another goal of the field trip was to give the partner school district a chance to promote the variety of programs available to students and their teachers on their campuses. The impact of this new experience was impactful for PSTs as they widened their expectations for what schools could look like. Ten statements (6 percent) emphasized the power of these experiences. One PST spent time on a dual-language magnet campus and said, "I have nothing like this at home, so it was amazing to see this type of school." (Respondent 18). PSTs only know what they have seen and many of them have not experienced a great variety of school contexts.

The final emergent theme (61 statements, 38 percent) centered around structural problems with the trip such as the busses and the desire for a more clearly defined itinerary. Clearly length of travel, directions to participants, and accommodations were important to our PSTs. Their complaints can be taken under advisement and problems rectified to improve the quality of the experience. The shortcomings they pointed out should not take away from the positive impact made on the PSTs who were able to attend the field trip, but they do serve as a reminder that the structure of the field trip can be a help or a hindrance to participants having a positive experience and being able to focus on students and teachers in the schools they visited.

Discussion

As PSTs decide where to conduct their clinical and full-time teaching, they are often choosing between the familiar locales of home and university or the unfamiliar locale of the high-needs school. High-needs school districts have been exploring new and innovative methods for attracting teacher candidates, but methods of challenging teacher preferences for more familiar school contexts should also be explored. Targeted interventions such as the field trip presented here could be one way to increase PSTs' familiarity with these school contexts and increase the likelihood that they might later choose to work in high-needs schools. The field trip intervention explored in this study is an example of how partnerships between teacher preparation institutions and school districts can provide access to networks of teachers looking for jobs (Maier & Youngs, 2009).

PSTs indicated that the field trip experience positively changed their feelings about clinical or full-time teaching in an urban and diverse school. This suggests that experiences such as the field trip could help teacher recruitment efforts by increasing PST comfort with high-needs districts. That increased comfort level might lead to greater numbers of PSTs choosing to conduct their clinical teaching in similar contexts. This finding corresponds with research that indicates building familiarity with school context can increase the possibilities of teaching in schools of a similar context down the road (Goldhaber et al., 2017).

PSTs also indicated the importance of spending time to observe classrooms. They commented how this aspect of the experience was the most impactful and appreciated. These PSTs expressed a desire to observe a variety of classroom experiences, even those different than those they had experienced themselves as students. Exposing PSTs to classroom situations can be a powerful tool in helping them to develop an accurate concept of what teaching will entail (Anderson, Barksdale, & Hite, 2005), especially when supported by structures to guide their viewing of teaching and learning (Waxman, Rodriguez, Padron, & Knight, 1988). In attempting to better prepare PSTs for the challenges of teaching, teacher preparation institutions should seek to complement their course offerings with a diverse array of field experiences. Hosting these field experiences at high-needs schools can accomplish the double feat of helping to better prepare our PSTs and increase the likelihood that they will be comfortable teaching in the context of those campuses.

The attractiveness of teaching in the familiar locales similar to that of PSTs' home and university presents a challenge to urban, high-needs districts looking to hire and retain teachers for their diverse students. Partnerships between school districts and teacher preparation institutions should be encouraged and those that already exist should be utilized to help introduce PSTs to the context of high-needs schools. These introductions should precede clinical teaching placement in hopes that PSTs will consider returning to the high-needs locales for that critical experience in their preservice preparation program. Innovative experiential interventions such as the field trip presented here hold some promise for school districts and their teacher preparation institution partners as they attempt to meet the growing need for high-quality teachers in our diverse, urban schools.

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TEACHER RETENTION: IN RURAL SCHOOLS NESTED IN LARGE DISTRICTS

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Abstract

Teacher recruitment and retention have been longstanding challenges in rural school districts. Rural schools often fail to attract highly effective teachers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) due to lower pay, long distances from urban areas, lack of teaching resources, and limited opportunities for professional development (Eddy, 2007; Jean-Marie & Moore, 2004; Monk, 2007; Schmidt, 2004). Large school districts in deep South Texas, where this study took place, are building schools outside the parameters of their cities due to a burgeoning population. This study sought to discover reasons teachers choose to teach in rural schools nested in these large school districts and to identify factors that contribute to their decisions to stay. Findings indicated that teachers were drawn to teach in rural schools in large urban school districts because they felt they could "fit in" and connect with the school personnel and families. Factors contributing to their retention included having: 1) a connection and/or shared experience(s) with their students, some as formerly impoverished students of rural schools themselves, 2) an ethic of caring and an intrinsic desire to make a difference for rural school children, and 3) a willingness to embrace challenges of teaching in rural schools. Implications of these findings will be discussed.

Keywords: rural schools, large districts, challenges, recruitment, retention

Research indicates there are common challenges that small rural school districts face-- especially those in more remote areas that are located considerably further than 25 miles from an urbanized area, and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster. Many school districts are forced to do more with less by consolidating campuses, employing out-of-field teachers, and decreasing course offerings just to teach the basics (Jimerson, 2005). As a result, small rural school districts commonly experience high teacher turnover. Poverty is more prevalent in all rural areas than in urban or suburban areas, and it has been found to span generations (Mattingly, Johnson, Schaefer, 2011; Gagnon, Mattingly, 2015). Many rural school districts are strapped for funding and limited in resources. They feel the pressure of meeting state-mandated accountability requirements that are the same for all districts, regardless of size. Larger districts in the area where this study took place have more access to obtaining state and federal funding due to having large numbers of low socioeconomic status (SES) students, such as Title I funding. This is a disadvantage for smaller school districts with substantially lower enrollments of high need students.

Most small rural districts have fewer students attending college than those from urban or suburban areas (Gagnon, Mattingly, 2015). Universities situated near rural areas do not produce the number of teachers as universities located in metropolitan areas. Therefore, the pool of available teachers to teach in rural areas is smaller than the pool of teachers available to teach in metropolitan areas. Moreover, teacher preparation programs rarely make efforts to expose preservice teachers to rural schools in small school districts in their clinical field experiences. It can be costly for students to travel outside cities and there may be a lack of adequate funding to support travel costs for university supervisors.

Despite these identified challenges, recent studies on rural areas have associated high academic attainment with smaller schools and districts (Hopkins, 2005; Howley & Howley, 2006; Johnson et al., 2010; Redding & Walberg, 2012; Stewart, 2009). Williams (2010) reported that studies over the past 40 years have shown that students in small schools showed equal or higher academic achievement and graduated at a higher rate than students in larger schools. Classes in rural schools tend to be moderately smaller (Monk, 2007). The student-to-teacher ratios are considerably lower in both elementary and secondary rural schools as they enroll fewer students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

Context of the Study

This study took place along the Texas-Mexico border in South Texas. This region has been identified as one of the fastest growing regions in the nation for the past few decades as well as one of the poorest areas in the nation (U.S. Department of HUD, 2014; U.S. Census American Fact Finder, 2015). The dramatic growth in population has resulted in the need for school districts in medium-sized towns and cities to expand their services to school-age students who live in the outskirts of their urban local school districts. There are children and adolescents who live in rural areas located 20 miles or more from the town or city. This ongoing growth has resulted in a need to build new schools in the rural areas outside the towns or cities. We were interested in learning more about the teachers who chose to teach in this type of school. We wondered if the recruitment and retention issues that small rural school districts in this area commonly face are similar to the challenges that rural schools nested in larger school districts experience.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to discover reasons teachers choose to teach in rural schools nested in large school districts and to identify factors that contribute to their decisions to stay. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the general demographics of the rural campuses in this study?
2. What draws teachers to teach in rural schools nested in these large school districts?
3. What factors contribute to their decisions to stay at these rural schools nested in large school districts?

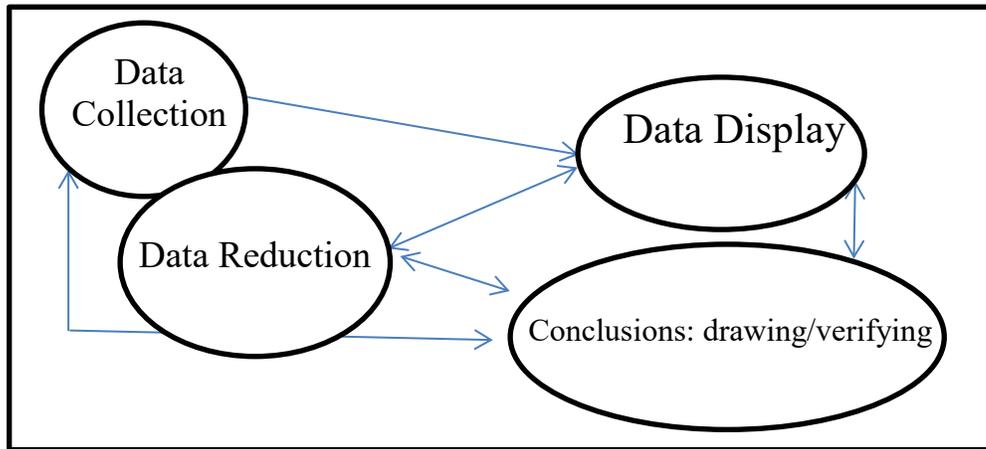
Data Collection

Data collection methods included demographic surveys, focus group interviews, and participant observations. Researchers gained access to two large urban school districts (District A and District B) with rural campuses in South Texas. District A had a population of 29,590 students with 44 campuses with a geographic region of 226 square miles. District B had a population of 34,500 students with 43 campuses covering 56 square miles. Ten teacher participants were selected from each district (n=20). The principals of each campus invited teachers who had a minimum of five years teaching experience from their respective campuses to participate in this study. All were elementary teachers and most were Mexican American.

Data Analysis

The focus of this descriptive study was to describe teachers who worked in rural schools nested in two large rural districts, to discover reasons they chose to take these teaching positions, and perhaps most importantly, the reasons they chose to stay. We used a pragmatic approach (Patton, 1990) to analyzing our study that was informed by ethnography, phenomenology, and LatCrit research. Demographic data about the schools were extracted from the Texas Education Agency 2015-2016 Texas Academic Performance Reports. Qualitative data were analyzed by affixing codes to a set of field notes or interview transcriptions. After data were coded, the Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model was employed in order to verify findings and (Figure 1.) and draw conclusions.

Figure 1: Miles and Huberman’s Interactive Model



Findings

Survey data indicated that during the time that the study took place, the state population of students identified as Hispanic was 52.2%. District A had almost twice the number of Hispanics students as the state average at 99.6%. The state average of economically disadvantaged students was 59.0%. Once again, District A considerably surpassed the state average with 94.2% identified as economically disadvantaged. Striking was the fact that the majority of students, 80.5% at this district, were identified as "at risk", considerably higher than the state average of 50.1%. Students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) comprised 51.4 % in District A, as compared to the state average of 18.5%. The mobility rate of students at District A was 18.2% as compared to the state average of 16.5%. Having a high mobility rate is also a characteristic of rural families in this area due to job loss and other circumstances.

Table 1

Demographics for 2015-2016: District A

	Total Students	Hispanic	White	English Language Learners	Economically Disadvantaged	At Risk	Mobility Rate
District	29,533	99.6% n=29,410	0.3% n=91	51.4% n=15,166	94.2% n=27,808	80.5% n=23,764	18.2% n=196
State	5,284,253	52.2%	28.5%	18.5%	59.0%	50.1%	16.5%

District B was similar to District A in terms of size of student population and overall composition of the student body. The total student population for District B was 97.2% (n= 33,507) Hispanic, most who were also identified as economically disadvantaged students (85.2%). This is also substantially higher as compared to the state average of 59%. The at-risk population was also higher than the state average of 50.1% at 61.9%. Students identified as English Language Learners comprised 31.9 % in this district compared to the state average of 18.5%.

Table 2

Demographics for 2015-2016: District B

	Total Students	Hispanic	White	English Language Learners	Economically Disadvantaged	At Risk	Mobility Rate
District	34,466	97.2%	1.7%	31.9%	85.2%	61.9%	17.1%
		n=33,507	n=603	n=10,991	n=29,360	n=21,343	n=182
State	5,284,253	52.2%	28.5%	18.5%	59.0%	50.1%	16.5%

This study drew heavily on focus group and fieldnotes data to address the second and third research questions: What draws teachers to teach in rural schools nested in these large school districts? What factors contribute to their decisions to stay at these rural schools nested in large school districts? Four general themes emerged from these data. These included the following: building relationships, valuing support systems, embracing disadvantaged students, and connecting with students. Each of these themes are discussed in what follows.

Building Relationships

The first theme that emerged in the data was described as "building relationships." These relationships included those established with students, parents, and the local community. As one teacher stated, "You build the rapport with the children and there is a certain connection because after them; their siblings follow, and you get to know the family a little bit more. You, more-or- less, know what their needs are and what kind of family environment they live in." Another teacher added, "You know the history or the background [of the students], so I think being in a small community and getting to know the families, you have a better handle [sense] of things [at home]."

The teachers also indicated they had parent meetings which provided opportunities to get to know the parents on a more personal level. The teachers discovered that while working in low socioeconomic areas, parents were very supportive of their children's education. It was obvious that parents cared deeply for their children; however, they expressed frustration that they lacked the academic skills to help them to be successful in school due to their own limited levels of education and language proficiency in English.

Community relationships were established by principals who called on community members or business partners to visit the schools and provide funding for school initiatives. It was common for businesses such as Walmart, Target, and HEB to sponsor school events that gave students incentives to do well in school and to support parental involvement. Examples include: 1) providing prizes for students who have perfect attendance and have excelled academically, and 2) providing prizes for reading and spelling competitions (trophies, pizza parties, gift cards, field trips, bicycles, computers, electronic games, tablets, etc...). These community partners also incentivized and supported parental involvement activities with resources to support classes after school for parents on topics such as nutrition, wellness, parental skills, employment skills, and ESL instruction.

Valuing Support Systems

Teachers described several types of support systems in their schools that reflected an ethic of caring for children and families in poor rural communities. This finding was consistent with most of the students' Mexican American background and home culture which traditionally holds school principals and teachers with high regard and respect (Gonzalez, G.G., 1990). In fact, most of the students in these schools are first generation Mexican Americans, and their families were very humble, respectful, and appreciative.

For these rural school teachers, working with exemplary and experienced school principals was a major factor in their decision to continue to teach at their rural school. Some of the participants stated they stayed on their campuses because of the support they consistently received from the school leaders who invested heavily in their teaching success by providing

curricular resources, training, mentoring, and professional development. A common refrain from teacher participants about the community, the students, and the administration was that they were all "wonderful" to them. The participants felt supported by their school leadership teams and indicated that this support was a critical reason they preferred to teach in economically disadvantaged rural school environments. They all expressed that they felt free to ask one another for assistance.

As one teacher expressed, "every day is a new beginning.... because we are accomplishing tasks that other teachers do not want to do." Upon further probing, this comment intended to mean that teachers at the rural schools confront and solve numerous obstacles than their counterparts who teach in more diverse, wealthier schools located in their large districts. The teachers described their love of teaching and close relationships established with other teachers. Consistent among the teacher participants in this study was an early establishment of collegiality from other teachers that were going through the same situations that they were experiencing. This camaraderie amongst peers with varied levels of teaching experience brought them a sense of comfort and support.

A few participants stated that they were hired the same day they interviewed to teach at the school. Other participants were contacted and offered the job to teach the day after they interviewed. For some participants, this was their first job, and they decided to work at the rural campus because they believed the students would be more respectful than students in more urban settings, and they believed that students needed them as positive role models. One teacher said, "Administration, teachers, and family are important, so when we have something to say, the administration will listen and will actually let us be part in trying things out." Another participant added that "without the support of administrators, we would have a hard time being successful." This theme emphasized the significance of supportive leadership and collegiality as critical systems of support for recruitment and retention of teachers in small rural schools located in large school districts. Principals had a bottom-up approach of leadership and preferred to figure out solutions to issues collaboratively with input from their teachers.

Embracing At-Risk Students

As Table 1 and Table 2 indicate, a large percentage of the students enrolled in these school districts are identified as Hispanic and at-risk, who have encountered many challenges. They come from economically disadvantaged homes, and a large percentage are ELLs. The educational achievement of the parents is low overall, as some parents do not have formal schooling, while others did not complete middle or high school. Many of these students face challenges and teachers display strong advocacy for them.

For example, one participant said, "It is hard at times because of the needs of the students and the limited resources they have, but we begin to understand [the children], and things turn around. We find ways to work with the students." Another teacher added, "Sometimes we inspire our students to strive to do well in school for a better quality of life in the future."

Most of the students are in the same situation because they come from very similar backgrounds. Another teacher added, "When you are poor and everyone is poor, you don't know the difference. It's about being happy with what you have. I enjoy teaching these students and welcome them in my classes because they are so humble and grateful."

The teachers stated that the resources the students lacked made a significant impact on the schools' staff. The poverty surrounding them made it hard for the parents to provide the essential items their children needed for school. Teachers got creative and stretched the resources as much as they could. The teachers bought students small bonus gifts such as educational card games and board games. One teacher stated that "... when a parent had to make a choice between buying a notebook and buying food, their choice was to feed the family." The teachers could see that students were grateful for all they receive at school. For these reasons, it was apparent that teachers embraced what their students brought to the classroom and looked forward to teaching them every day.

Connecting with Students

Connecting with students was another emergent theme in this study. Teachers revealed that in the first few weeks of school, they establish relationships with their students. Once it was apparent to students that they were safe and comfortable with their teachers, they were more accepting and respectful to the teachers. As previously stated, all teachers in this study could definitely connect to their students on some level. Teachers stated that students tended to gravitate to them once that level of trust was established.

However, a few teachers had deeper connections to impoverished students as they, too, had experienced some of the

hardships that their students live every day. As one teacher participant shared with us, "I love the kids; I know what they have gone through. I know what it is like to swim across the river and have no any idea where you are going to have your next meal. I choose to stay at this campus because they are reflections of me."

The teachers could also relate to the students because they came from the same types of family and cultural backgrounds. Their stories were told throughout the interviews, as the connection they felt with the students were the same struggles they encountered as young students. Someone connected to them and made a difference in their lives. It was important for the teachers to make that difference in the lives of these children. Teachers added that they could relate to the children because they also attended schools with similar demographics. This common experience motivated them to help the students in any way they could. One teacher added that she was considered economically disadvantaged growing up, and her parents worked in the fields or had some type of hard labor. Her family's background was very valuable and that helped her connect to the children, parents and community. Another teacher added, "I can relate to the environment and to the students as I am bilingual, and I came to the United States when I was in third grade. I did not know any English, so I try to help the students as much as I can because I was that student."

Another teacher shared her feelings as someone who came from Mexico when she was in elementary school. She added, "My family was poor, and I did not have shoes to go to school." She recalled running from tree to tree to cool off. She claimed that she loved working with her students because she knew what they had gone through.

Some teachers expressed that by teaching in rural schools, they found ways to connect and help the students. They were not just teachers. They also took on the roles of being the students' nurses, mothers, and counselors at school. Another teacher voiced, "I am not from this community; I'm not even from this state, but I've been here for a while, and I've been able to make a connection with the students and their parents. These kids are economically disadvantaged, and it is hard to get to their level, to their hearts. I feel that it's somehow easy, but hard at the same time, to help this population."

Conclusions and Implications

Most teachers in the U.S. desire to teach in school districts that are similar to the ones they graduated from (Mahan, 2010); however, the need for teachers is not always in areas that are consistent with this common desire. Teacher participants in this study chose to teach in rural schools located in large school districts. They shared their personal stories that shed light on factors that contributed to their decisions to work and stay in rural schools. Findings in this study revealed that teachers who teach in rural schools nested in large school districts had: 1) a connection and/or shared experience(s) with their students, some as formerly impoverished students of rural schools themselves, 2) an ethic of caring and an intrinsic desire to make a difference for rural school children, and 3) a willingness to embrace challenges of teaching in rural schools.

Establishing strong relationships with students, families, teachers and principals was identified as being critically important. Having strong mentoring support to assist rural teachers with instructional support and resources was also identified as imperative to their retention. In addition, having previously lived in a rural place or having had previous experience with rural communities was an additional advantage in establishing connections with students. Teachers in this study made personal connections with their students. Some also had lived in rural communities and experienced poverty as children, so they had deep insight into their lived experiences. Almost all were originally from the region where this study took place and all were Mexican American. The teacher participants revealed a shared ethic of caring and an intrinsic desire to make a difference in the lives of their students. They were natural advocates for their students and strived to "inspire" and "make a difference" in their students' lives.

Although this qualitative study has several limitations including small number of participants (n=20), time, method, and place, it yielded significant findings and has implications for principal and teacher preparation. As more rural communities located on the fringes of large urban communities perpetuate the need for large school districts to build new rural schools, and as more small rural schools consolidate with larger urban districts, this study can provide guidance for principals who experience challenges with recruitment and retention of teachers in their rural schools.

In this study, principals made intentional decisions to create strong teacher support systems. Their teachers described their leadership and "supportive leadership" that sought out teacher input and collaboration. Teachers were appreciative of principals that valued their ideas and gave them opportunities to engage in decision-making collaboratively. This kind of leadership has been described as place-conscious capacity building. Leaders, who utilize a place, use a conscious model of

leadership, engage community members in decision making, increase stakeholder capacity and ensure sustainability can prove themselves (Johnson, Thompson & Naugle, 2009.). In addition, the development of teacher leaders who can share their expertises with students, fellow teachers, and administrators' can serve as a teacher retention strategy in rural schools (Franklin, 2012).

Teachers also expressed a realization that they needed each other in order to be effective teachers in rural campuses. There was a natural tendency for teachers to share their personal stories when their students' stories converged with their own. These "testimonios" are very common in the Mexican American culture (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). Since all of the teacher participants were Mexican American teachers of Mexican American students, they shared their stories with their students describing how they overcame hardships and were resilient in overcoming challenges. These teachers were deeply aware of the power and responsibility to advocate for their students and to serve as role models. They tried to establish a family atmosphere in their classes. It was not uncommon to hear teachers refer to their students in terms of endearment that parents commonly use such as "mijo" (son) and "mija" (daughter). This sense of familial community in the classrooms and schools is consistent with traditional Mexican and Mexican American culture of this region in South Texas. Students, the majority being from traditional Mexican American families and many being immigrants from Mexico, are brought up to respect and to trust their teachers. This cultural disposition was identified as being one of the reasons teachers were generally happy with their workplace and it factored into their decisions to stay.

Finally, these findings also have implications for educator preparation programs that normally do not give preservice teachers clinical experiences in rural schools. As more small rural districts merge with large districts, and as more large districts find they must expand into rural areas outside their urban areas, there is an obvious need for preservice teachers to be provided field experiences in these settings. These clinical field experiences should be designed to provide learning opportunities for reflective teaching practices with high need students in rural settings as their needs differ from urban and suburban schools—particularly when most of the students are Hispanic, poor, "at-risk", and ELL. This study can serve as a potential guide for teacher educators and clinical teachers who get placed in rural schools with large populations of Mexican American students.

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PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EFFICACY IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

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Abstract

One of the critical issues in K-12 education today is addressing the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students. Several studies have found disproportionate achievement outcomes for K-12 students of diverse socio-cultural and multicultural backgrounds as compared to White students. Teacher preparation programs are integral in developing the extent to which pre-service teachers (PSTs) feel ready to effectively and equitably meet the needs of all students, particularly in terms of culturally responsive pedagogy and socio-emotional learning. This study was conducted in a large research university in the southern part of Texas and explores PSTs perceptions (n=129) regarding opportunity and confidence in social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. The results show strong positive correlations between culturally responsive teaching opportunity and culturally responsive teaching confidence as well as strong relationships between social emotional learning opportunity and social emotional learning confidence. The ANOVA results indicate increased confidence in pre-service teachers' perceptions on culturally responsive teaching based on grade classification. Implications for educator preparation programs are discussed.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, social-emotional learning, culturally-responsive teaching, survey research

Providing pre-service teachers (PSTs) with the myriad experiences needed to prepare them for the teaching profession can be a daunting task for teacher preparation programs. Though content knowledge and pedagogical practices are essential, it is also imperative that PSTs recognize that teaching students involves more than just these dimensions. In the ever-changing landscape of diversity in America, PSTs would benefit from acknowledging that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and social emotional learning (SEL) are critical components of meeting the needs of the students that will be entrusted within their care. While national statistics show that the majority of U.S. teachers in K-12 continue to be a very homogenous group, specifically, 75% are White females, 10% are White males, 6% are Black females, and 1% of teachers are Black males (Bryan & Ford, 2014; CAEP, 2014), student demographics represent a much more diverse population. A 2019 NCES report indicates that between 2000 and 2015, the overall U.S. school population rose from 47.2 million to 50.4 million, while the percentage of White and Black students decreased from 61% to 49% and 17% to 15% respectively, and the number of Hispanic students rose from 16% to 26% (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Furthermore, projections of increasing school diversity are expected to continue increasing to 52.1 million by 2027, with the number of White students continuing to decline and Hispanic, Asian and Pacific islanders continuing to increase (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). As the diverse classrooms of the 21st century continue to grow, teacher preparation programs (TPP) have a responsibility to identify and teach effective cultural pedagogy that addresses the multiple cultures, languages, abilities and various other characteristics of students (Heraldo, Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). In essence, there is a pragmatic urgency to ensure that prospective teachers are properly and comprehensively equipped to navigate the instruction of culturally pluralistic educational spaces. Additionally, along with addressing the cultural needs of students, it is essential for PSTs to recognize that classrooms are often the arena for students to continuously develop social and emotional skills over time and in the context of daily life in order to manage negative emotions, develop and nurture adult and peer relationships, follow directions and learn how to be calm; yet PSTs receive little training in addressing SEL issues (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

By addressing both CRT and SEL, we propose that these two constructs go hand in hand in teacher preparation programs. Moreover, we fundamentally regard teachers as door-openers to students' expansion of knowledge and skills. Cultivation of knowledge must include those cultural histories which have been erased, marginalized, rewritten, or told through one dominant, hegemonic lens. As such, this study is interested in understanding the extent to which PSTs feel a sense of efficacy towards CRT and SEL. The following research questions will explore PSTs efficacy within their teacher preparation program regarding:

1. What are PSTs' perceived opportunities to learn SEL and CRT?
2. What are PSTs' confidence toward learning SEL and CRT?
3. Is there a correlation between opportunity and confidence for both CRT and SEL?
4. Are there differences on CRT and SEL by student classification and students on financial aid (FAFSA)?

Culturally Responsive Teaching

To fully understand CRT, it is helpful to acknowledge that it is often comprised of multiple dimensions and may also use alternate terminology to address this area. For example, Malo-Juvera, Correll, and Cantrell (2018) summarize the idea of culturally responsive instruction (CRI), where cultural pedagogy incorporates "students' cultural knowledge and experiences to make learning relevant and consequently more effective" (p. 146). This mirrors Nieto and Bode's (2008) discussion on the importance of using culturally responsive pedagogy as it improves academic achievement by building on students' experiences and cultural knowledge. Heraldo, et al. (2007), on the other hand, suggest that culturally responsive pedagogy works at three levels including institutional, personal, and instructional where, "effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement" (p. 64). The common thread accounts for a system of social justice in education and social change through the classroom (Aronson & Laughter, 2015), especially in light of demographic trends mentioned above where the predominantly White female teachers who make up the majority of educators in U.S. classrooms find themselves teaching in a markedly different setting than the one in which they learned (Harrison & Lakin, 2018).

In addition, teachers may not recognize that their values, biases, negative feelings, and prejudices may impact the relationships that are established with students and their families and contribute to the overall success (or lack of) for these students (Richards, et al., 2007). Sugimoto, Carter, and Stoehr (2017) found that PSTs often had "conflicting orientations

towards English learners” (p. 185). This conflict was typically based on a number of reasons, including modeling by the mainstream classroom teacher. Additionally, Sleeter (2008) notes the tendency of teachers to have lower academic expectations for children of color based on cultural identity stereotypes. Finally, Monroe and Obidah (2004) illustrated that teachers engage in unnecessary disciplinary action as a failure on their part to understand certain behaviors through appropriate sociocultural lenses. While these studies point to the negative implications of ineffective CRT, Aronson and Laughter’s (2016) systematic review evaluated a number of studies, finding evidence of improved academic skills and concepts across the content areas (math, science, social studies and English language arts) as well as affective domains, like motivation and engagement, when culturally relevant practices were employed. TPPs must provide comprehensive experiences that prepare future educators for effectively meeting the needs of the diverse classrooms of the 21st century.

For the purpose of our study, the authors used the theoretical framework for CRT established by Siwatu (2007), which establishes that four main areas must be addressed in order to have culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom to facilitate learning:

1. Curriculum and instruction uses students’ cultural knowledge, experiences and individual learning preferences;
2. Classroom management incorporates students’ cultural orientation for classroom environment;
3. Multiple and varied student assessment techniques and opportunities are available for students to demonstrate their knowledge;
4. Cultural enrichment and competence where knowledge and skills are imparted in order to allow students to function in mainstream culture while retaining their own cultural identity and native language.

We contend that this framework incorporates the main components needed to address CRT at individual, institutional, social, and familial levels.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social emotional learning (SEL) encompasses a broad range of competencies needed by teachers in today’s ever-challenging learning environment. While we know teacher retention is a major issue across the U.S., research shows that teachers often leave the profession as a result of behavior management issues (Albrecht, Johns, Mounstevan, & Olorunda, 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). While SEL comprises more than how to handle discipline, understanding the socio-emotional needs of students is crucial to mitigating causes of teacher attrition. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Model (CASEL, 2019) defines SEL as the “capacity to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges.” (<https://casel.org/core-competencies>). The framework established by CASEL addresses other competencies as well as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competencies. CASEL addresses five specific core competencies, each encompassing a variety of areas. These five competencies include Social Awareness, Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making, Relationship Skills, and Self-Management (CASEL, 2019).

Addressing the social emotional learning needs of students due to the positive outcomes is echoed throughout research (Main, 2018; Yoder, 2014). SEL skills are strongly associated with success in school and other aspects of life (McKown, 2017; Yoder, 2014), and interventions in schools and other settings offer lifelong benefits as students’ progress to college and the workforce (Taylor, Oberle, Durlack, & Weissburg, 2017; Yoder, 2014). Allensworth, et al. (2017) discussed the importance of student engagement, classroom environment, and the role of teachers in creating responsive classrooms that develop not only the academic but also the social and emotional well-being of students. While a substantial body of evidence exists that supports integration of SEL in schools, a 2017 survey reported that only 58% of principals set goals for their campus, while only 44% of teachers set SEL goals for their classroom (Doss, Johnston, & Akinniranye, 2017). Although this study found urban teachers and principals more likely to set such goals, the percentages were still low.

In a 2017 meta-analysis that synthesized the impact of social-emotional interventions found that the outcomes of social emotional intervention programs were positive in areas such as social emotional assets, including social and emotional skills, attitudes toward self, others and school, positive social behaviors, academic problems, conduct problems, emotional distress, and substance use (Taylor, Oberle, Durlack, & Weissburg, 2017). Compared to the control group, students involved in intervention programs demonstrated stronger SEL skills and improved attitudes. Additionally, participants had significant academic performance outcomes, coping skills for dealing with emotional stress, and less drug use. In addition to exploring intervention impacts, the study examined the outcomes across diverse populations. There were significant positive effects across demographic subgroups (i.e., racial, SES, international) for participants in SEL programs following SEL intervention. Knowing the results of SEL interventions for students warrants evaluation of SEL competencies in TPPs and how they prepare PSTs for the socio-emotional needs of students.

Goegan, Wagner, and Daniels (2017) evaluated both PSTs and in-service teacher's comfort and commitment to social emotional learning. The study found PSTs' comfort with SEL was positively correlated with a commitment to SEL. PSTs indicated less competence in SEL as well as comfort in implementing SEL practices than in-service teachers. As noted in Larson and Samdal's (2012) study, explicit teaching of techniques in social competence improved in-service teachers' ability to meet the social and emotional needs of students. The evidence from the study points to the necessity to create confidence among PSTs to embed social emotional pedagogical practices. The cultivation of social emotional competence is necessary for PSTs as they prepare to navigate interpersonal and social concerns within the classroom. As a result, we implore TPPs consider the same practices.

Social Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

While the literature is robust regarding the need to develop students' social emotional learning as well as the need to implement culturally responsible teaching practices, the literature scantily discusses the integration of the two competencies. One systematic literature review identified and analyzed the social, emotional and behavioral interventions used with students of color, providing a framework for schools when starting such intervention programs (Brown, Maggin, & Buren, 2018). Another study analyzed the combining of SEL, CRT and positive behavior intervention supports at an elementary campus, documenting the 3-year process for implementing evidence-based interventions with positive student outcomes (Cressey, 2019). A few studies exist that analyze in-service teacher perceptions when using culturally responsive practices with SEL interventions (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). In one study, in-service teachers' perceptions and practices with culturally responsive teaching were intertwined with a school-adopted SEL intervention program, RULER (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). Findings from the study indicated teacher need for training not only in SEL, but also in CRT pedagogy. In fact, participants in the study noted the foundational importance of receiving training in CRT before the implementation of an SEL intervention for obtaining the best student outcomes regarding academic and social-emotional progress.

McCallops, et al. (2019) describe an idea known as culturally responsive SEL (2019). Culturally responsive SEL (CRSEL) considers students' frame of reference as well as students lived experiences while integrating the teaching of SEL competencies (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). In McCallops', et al. (2019) international systematic literature review of CRSEL intervention used in urban K-12 schools, only five of the 51 studies explicitly reviewed in the analysis used CRSEL. While other studies in this review mentioned cultural aspects of students in their specific studies, McCallops points out the need for the combination of both CRT and SEL.

Other studies regarding CRT and SEL involve various other school populations. One study analyzed social skills education with urban students identified as having emotional or behavioral disorders (Robinson-Ervin, P., Cartledge, G., Musti-Rao, S., Gibson Jr., L., & Keyes, S. E. 2016). Other studies analyze the use of CRT and SEL in school counseling programs (e.g. Cook et al, 2017; Cook, et al., 2018). In each of these studies, students experienced positive academic and social outcomes when CRT practices were combined with SEL interventions. However, to date, no research was found where CRT and SEL competencies were integrated in TPPs' training of PSTs. Yet, considering the diversification of the classroom and the continued homogenous workforce, understanding of cultural backgrounds has the potential to impact SEL understanding and implementation. Hence, this study aims to identify PSTs efficacy in each of these competencies, addressing a gap in the literature regarding PST training.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were undergraduate PSTs enrolled in the TPPs at a large research-based TPP located in the south-central part of Texas. Pre-service teachers received an email with a survey to complete voluntarily; from the survey, PSTs had the opportunity to indicate if they wanted to participate in a structured phone interview protocol. Of those that received the survey, 134 responded.

Five respondents were eliminated who were either graduate students or not seeking certification for a total of 129 valid responses. In some cases, however, there were missing values which lowered the actual number of responses in some categories. Of those included in the analysis, there were 24% of the undergraduates classified as freshman, 28% as sophomores, 25% as juniors, and 22% classified as seniors. Based upon certification type being sought, 61% of the participants were seeking the PK-6th-grade certification, 28% were seeking the middle grades certification (4th-8th grades), and 23% were seeking secondary

certification. Additionally, 14% of the participants listed “other”, which included those seeking special education certification. In some cases, students responded that they were seeking more than one certification.

Student experiences regarding the number of courses taken and the amount of field experience varied by classification, which is to be expected. Approximately 90% of students have had field placements within the last year. On average, the participants had 10 hours of education coursework, and the number of field hours was a median of 25 hours. Of those surveyed, 25% of respondents were first-generation college students. Nearly all of the respondents were under the age of 23, ranging between 18 to 23 years old, and 94% were female. About half of the participants were working part-time with 46% qualifying for financial aid through the FAFSA program. The ethnic breakdown showed that 74% of the participants were White, 23% were Hispanic, and 4% were Other. Approximately 79% of participants attended a public high school, with nearly 54% attending suburban schools, 31% attending rural schools and 15% attending urban schools. Only 26% of the participants attended predominantly White high schools. PSTs in the program are required to take one multicultural education course at some point in their program, and this course does not focus on CRT. There are no SEL components formally addressed in the TPP at this university.

Instrument

Based on our review of the research and other instruments, we developed a survey for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). This study is being conducted in order to examine the opportunity and confidence level of PSTs in both of these areas. The research team developed the survey instrument *Social Emotional and Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey* to explore PSTs’ perceptions of the extent to which the education courses taken at this juncture have focused on social-emotional learning and CRT practices.

Participants were asked to rate their experiences in each area. Specifically, students were asked to evaluate how often they had the opportunity to learn or experience various aspects of SEL and CRT practices, as well as how confident they felt in those teaching practices. The questions on the survey were 4-point Likert-type questions based on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Model (CASEL, 2019) and Siwatu’s (2007) Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy and Outcome Expectancy scales. Also, the survey included demographic questions, such as participants’ classification and federal student-aid qualification through the FAFSA program.

The survey instrument explored three main themes: (a) PSTs experiences in social-emotional learning, (b) culturally responsive teaching practices, and (c) general multicultural dispositions. An exploratory factor analysis was performed to examine the construct validity of the instrument and then Cronbach’s alpha were used to establish the reliability for each of the four constructs. Table 1 summarizes the overall Factor Analysis results for the four constructs used in this study. The first 2 constructs centered around Social Emotional Learning. For Factor 1, SEL Social Awareness Opportunity, revealed items loading to one factor accounting for 63% of the variance with factor loadings ranging from .740 – .857. Cronbach’s alpha for this construct revealed a .956 reliability. For factor 2, SEL Social Awareness Confidence, the Cronbach’s alpha was .883, and the factor analysis accounted for 64% of the variance. All items loaded on one factor with factor loadings ranging from .683 - .884. Factors for the other SEL components did not provide strong reliability, therefore they were eliminated from the study.

The second area of focus in the survey was Culturally Responsive Teaching. Factor 3, Culturally Responsive Teaching Opportunity, had high factor loadings on one factor and accounted for 76% of the variance with the loadings ranging from .818 to .916. Cronbach’s alpha revealed a .934 reliability for this construct. Factor 4, Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence, also had high factor loadings on 1 factor with factor loadings ranging from .792-.911, accounting for 72% of the variance. The reliability showed a .921 Cronbach’s alpha.

The survey also included specific items intended to measure the multicultural dispositions of the respondents. Items for multicultural dispositions loaded on two factors. However, the results were non-discernable, so we analyzed it using one factor which accounted for 28% of the variance. Cronbach’s alpha revealed reliability of .677 for the factor. Because the amount of variance accounted for was low and the reliability was not as high as preferred, this factor was eliminated from our study.

Overall, the instrument included four construct and scales that were valid and highly reliable. In summary, the four scales included SEL Social Awareness Opportunity, SEL Social Awareness Confidence, Culturally Responsive Teaching Opportunity, and Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence.

Table 1

Factor Analysis of the Social Emotional and Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey

Items	Factor Loadings
Factor 1: SEL Social Awareness Opportunity	
Creating an atmosphere where students respect others	.740
Teach students to communicate clearly	.813
Helping students appreciate the diversity of others around them	.778
Guide students to take the perspective of others	.857
Guide students to resist inappropriate social pressures	.753
Guide students to establish healthy relationships	.797
Amount of Variance	63%
Cronbach's alpha reliability	.956
Factor 2: SEL Social Awareness Confidence	
Creating an atmosphere where students respect others	.683
Teach students to communicate clearly	.796
Helping students appreciate the diversity of others around them	.851
Guide students to take the perspective of others	.884
Guide students to resist inappropriate social pressures	.752
Guide students to establish healthy relationships	.809
Amount of Variance	64%
Cronbach's alpha reliability	.883
Factor 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching Opportunity	
Matching instruction to the students' learning preferences	.842
Revising instructional material to include a better representation of the students' cultural group	.916
Understanding cultural backgrounds in order to decrease likelihood of student-teacher misunderstandings	.818
Using my students' interests when designing instruction	.900
Valuing the Students' cultural background	.907
Helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds succeed in school	.832
Amount of Variance	76%
Cronbach's alpha reliability	.934
Factor 4: Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence	
Matching instruction to the students' learning preferences	.807
Revising instructional material to include a better representation of the students' cultural group	.814
Understanding cultural backgrounds in order to decrease likelihood of student-teacher misunderstandings	.792
Using my students' interests when designing instruction	.874
Valuing the Students' cultural background	.899
Helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds succeed in school	.911
Amount of Variance	72%
Cronbach's alpha reliability	.921

Data Analysis

The data analyses included correlations, paired sample t-tests, and Univariate ANOVAs. For the Univariate ANOVAs,

the independent variables were students' classification and federal student-aid qualification, which were both categorical: four levels for classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) and two levels for federal student aid qualification (yes/no). The dependent variables were opportunity in SEL social-awareness, confidence in SEL social-awareness, opportunity in CRT, and confidence in CRT, all continuous variables.

Results

The results revealed several statistically significant outcomes. The correlation results indicated a high statistically significant positive correlation between SEL Social Awareness Opportunity and SEL Social Awareness Confidence ($r = .722, p < .001$) (see Table 2). This suggests that as PSTs had the opportunity to experience social-awareness in Social-Emotional Learning, their confidence in doing so increased. Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence had a moderately high significant positive correlation with SEL Social Awareness Confidence ($r = .589, p < .001$) and a high statistically significant positive correlation with both SEL Social Awareness Confidence ($r = .744, p < .001$) and Culturally Responsive Teaching Opportunity ($r = .784, p < .001$). No other statistically significant correlations were found.

Table 2

Correlations among SEL and CRT Opportunity and Confidence

	SEL Social Awareness Opportunity	SEL Social Awareness Confidence	Culturally Responsive Teaching Opportunity	Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence
SEL Social Awareness Opportunity	1			
SEL Social Awareness Confidence	.722*	1		
Culturally Responsive Teaching Opportunity	.701**	.559**	1	
Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence	.589**	.744**	.784*	1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, 2-tailed tests

Paired sample t-tests were also conducted to compare differences among SEL confidence and opportunity and CRT confidence and opportunity. The analysis indicated that there were no statistical differences between SEL opportunity and SEL confidence ($t(74) = .452, p < .652$). The same was true for CRT opportunity and CRT confidence ($t(73) = 1.4, p < .652$).

Sets of univariate ANOVAs were conducted to examine the differences on the four scales by student classification (freshman, sophomore, junior or senior) and their family income (measured by their ability to qualify for financial aid). The results of those analyses were largely insignificant; however, we did find some significant variation between classification groups for one of the scales: CRT Confidence ($F(3, 94) = 1.544, p < .05$). The details for the ANOVA are found below in Table 3. For CRT Confidence, we found a significant main effect in how students felt about their confidence in teaching CRT content across classification. While not statistically significant, the Duncan post-hoc results (Table 4) revealed that senior students felt more confident than freshman students regarding culturally responsive teaching practices.

Table 3

Univariate ANOVA between Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence and Student Classification

Source	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Classification	3	.848	2.740	.050
Financial Aid	1	.128	.413	.523
Classification*Financial Aid	3	.478	1.544	.211
Error	67	.310		

Table 4

Duncan^{a,b,c} Post-Hoc Results for Culturally Responsive Teaching Confidence and Classification

Classification – Selected Choice	N	1	Subset 2
Freshman	15	3.167	
Sophomore	24	3.3889	3.3889
Junior	16	3.3958	3.3958
Senior	20		3.7083
Sig.		.248	.107

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = .310.

^a Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 18.113.

^b The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

^c *Alpha* = 0.05.

Discussion

The results of this study present a preliminary indication of preservice teachers' perceived opportunity to learn and confidence toward competence in SEL and CRT. This study also describes the measurement properties of new instrument that examines pre-service teachers' SEL and CRT, while also providing initial data using the instrument. Furthermore, the data show that the preservice teachers' opportunity and confidence level regarding CRT varied due to the students' classification. The findings of this study are discussed in more depth in the following paragraphs. Additionally, the implications addressed the extent the findings in this study may help in teacher education to prepare pre-service teachers' SEL and CRT competence.

PSTs Opportunity & Confidence

The results of this study provided insights into PSTs' perceptions primarily around the SEL construct of social awareness. The findings suggest that PSTs are more confident in SEL social-awareness if more opportunity is provided to learn the related concepts. That is, the implementation of the SEL social awareness experiences in TPP's has a positive influence on

the PST's teaching techniques as well as their more extensive social awareness. Studies have found that teachers become more emotionally inclusive and student-centered in their teaching, and more socially aware of students' needs and difficulties after receiving training on developing the characteristics of SEL (Larsen & Samdal, 2012). According to Rosenthal and Gatt's (2010), teachers who received the training on developing students' SEL social-awareness provided better support for their students than those who did not. As such, the importance of infusing SEL into courses in the TPP is an asset for future teachers in meeting the social-emotional social awareness needs of students. The PSTs' self-efficacy in helping students to develop SEL social awareness, such as, creating an atmosphere where students respect others, guiding students to resist inappropriate social pressures, and guiding students to establish healthy relationships, is strongly and positively influenced by the amount of time of getting exposure to the SEL concepts and the relevant curricular practical training in TPPs.

In the meantime, an accurate representation of the findings from this study suggest the importance of the opportunity to learn CRT in the teacher education program. As the opportunity of the PSTs to learn CRT associated notions increases, the confidence in their ability to teach in a multicultural background classroom context with the belief of CRT grows. Compared with the students from unilingual and mainstream cultural backgrounds, the continuing achievement gaps over students, who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, have become increasingly obvious. Culturally responsive teaching highlights the importance of making the delivery of the curriculum more in line with culturally diverse students' orientation in the classroom (Good, 2008). Thus, the confidence of preservice teachers in providing an inclusive learning environment for students in multicultural backgrounds and their capability in working on this issue to eventually have positive outcomes should be given vital importance in TPPs. However, the extent to which the PSTs are involved in culturally responsive teaching practices and become well-prepared is determined based on the fidelity and design of the TPPs program. In general, cultural diversity is a consistent and important strength in PST's careers and the educational issues unavoidably related with it. Therefore, PST's self-efficacy may be enhanced if practices incorporating CRT with content and pedagogical knowledge improve.

In addition, the scales of CRT opportunity and SEL social-awareness are statistically positively associated with each other in this study. The result indicates that sufficient CRT learning included in the TPP allows PSTs to broadly meet the students' social-emotional social awareness needs in a culturally diverse environment. Culturally responsive teaching is the cornerstone of meeting the needs of students' SEL. CRT combines classroom instruction and exercises with the cultural awareness and resources of generally ignored students and their societies and relations (Good, 2008). According to research on the perception of the CRT in teaching SEL, consolidating the use of culturally responsive teaching in developing students' SEL experiences is one of the most effective approaches to addressing this cultural mismatch (Barnes & McCallops, 2019). In the current situation, since the ongoing multicultural issues of the student population are known, teaching effectiveness cannot only be placed on White and middle-class students. However, few studies explored the issue of CRT learning promoting the ability of PSTs' efficacy on SEL.

Classification difference

Results from the ANOVAs do not provide surprising information. One would expect that as students' progress through their TPP, their confidence in various pedagogies would improve. Among the participants in this study, student experiences regarding the number of courses taken and the amount of field experience varied by classification. Interestingly, the results reveal that senior students have greater confidence in their culturally relevant abilities as compared with other grade level students. This result may point to the fact that students have had increased exposure and experience to increasingly diverse students through field placement or other educational endeavors. This is also consonant with the second finding of this study, that as students receive more exposure to CRT coursework and pertinent practices, the more positive their confidence becomes.

Limitations

While the study sheds light on one teacher educator preparation program's CRT and SEL practices, the expansion of the study could yield more insight into PSTs perceptions on these topics. With a small sample size, the findings cannot be generalized to other educator preparation programs. Future studies should consider expanding the research to additional universities in order to obtain a more robust finding. By expanding the present study across the state or even nation, the study would increase the diversity of the sample size, yielding stronger implications.

Additional limitations exist within the study. Due to the nature of survey research, the team relied upon self-reported data from current PSTs. Additionally, the survey was conducted at the end of a semester, when clinical teachers were preparing

for graduation, thus potentially limiting the amount of responses. Therefore, the release of the survey could be timed to be more accommodating of this fact. Continuing the study longitudinally would also add richness to the data.

Finally, the survey instrument, *Social Emotional and Culturally Responsive Teaching*, should be revised to obtain valid data on each of the SEL components. In order to measure all aspects of social-emotional learning, for example, scales should be developed and validated to encompass the five core competencies defined by CASEL. These include self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and of course, social awareness, the competence measured in this study. Once a revised instrument is created, it should be field tested for validity and reliability as well. The instrument could also be revised by obtaining data regarding the extent PSTs are exposed to both CRT and SEL and practical applications of such to determine how that impacts their comfort and confidence levels in each of these competencies.

Implications for Teacher Education

With the increase of an ever-changing and diverse student population entering the classroom, TPPs are implored to cultivate PST's confidence in implementing pedagogies that meet the socio-emotional needs of students as well as culturally responsive teaching practices. Such competencies must be embedded throughout the TPP coursework and field experiences, providing PSTs with rich, diverse experiences that enhance their practical applications of such pedagogies. Programs that provide more than a singular approach of offering a diversity course may provide a viable solution for TPPs.

Although this study looks into measurement properties of a new instrument, it provides preliminary data regarding PSTs comfort and confidence level with CRT and SEL at a Texas university. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature, as little has been done regarding these two constructs with PSTs. Since few studies have explored CRT and SEL collectively, we propose that connections between the two be explored in more depth from other PST programs. Future studies should examine both PST opportunity and confidence levels in CRT and SEL more extensively through the inclusion of other PST programs with hopes of effecting programmatic change. Additionally, interventions should be developed in TPPs identifying the specific areas of CRT and SEL in which PSTs lack training and confidence. PSTs should not only be introduced to CRT and SEL, but also provided opportunities for practical application and for integrated pedagogical applications into the course of study throughout.

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Manuscripts due June 12, 2020

The goal of the Forum is to promote scholarship regarding campus-based and field-based Teacher Education in Texas. The Forum includes manuscripts that make contributions to the field of teacher education including innovative pedagogical practices, field-based work with K-12 partners, and challenges and issues facing teacher education.

Proposed manuscripts undergo a double-blind review process and must be unpublished and not in review with other publications.

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Format: Cover Page (name, institution, & email of each author)
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 No page numbers
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Tables & Figures: Follow APA guidelines and **embed** within the manuscript.

Photographs/Artwork: Authors are responsible for obtaining permission for the use of any artwork or photographs. Permission documentation must accompany manuscript submission.

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