



Aligning a Performance-based Observation Rubric to Support a Teacher Performance Assessment

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Abstract

Preparing teacher candidates to become effective and reflective practitioners, the student teaching experience must be designed to guide candidates in applying the knowledge, theories and concepts acquired during their course of study. In addition, the experience should be aligned with the pedagogical knowledge, competence and dispositions that are evaluated through observations and performance-based assessments. This analysis reviewed the components of a student teaching practicum rubric used in a teacher preparation program to determine if the performance-based assessment supported the expectations and requirements of a teacher performance assessment. The results indicated that the observation rubric used by field supervisors to rate teacher candidates aligned with the cycle of teaching effectiveness identified in the teacher performance assessment. The analysis from this study suggest that early childhood teacher preparation programs should continuously examine how faculty and course instructors are utilizing performance-based assessment and evaluation instruments in their courses, fieldwork and student teaching experiences to support the professional preparation of teacher candidates.

Keywords: Teacher assessment, observations, teacher effectiveness

Introduction

The National Education Association (NEA, 2010) states that “Comprehensive systems of continuous teacher education and professional growth help teachers master content, refine their teaching skills, critically analyze their own performance and their students’ performance, and implement the changes needed to improve teaching and learning” (NEA, p.2). Furthermore, they state that the purpose of teacher assessment and evaluation should be to strengthen the knowledge, skills, dispositions and classroom practices of professional educators. To this end, NEA has identified six key principles

that serve as the foundation for developing or reforming any teacher assessment and evaluation system:

1. Safe and open collaboration.
2. Integrated systems linking evaluation procedures.
3. Validated evaluation measures.
4. Teachers' input in determining performance and learning outcomes.
5. Assessment and evaluation systems co-created or designed with teachers.
6. Measures of teacher performance are most helpful and meaningful when they are based on multiple ratings and clear teaching standards (NEA, 2010).

A quality system of teacher evaluation should be built on high-quality preparation and evaluated authentically through performance-based assessments that develop and measure novice teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Teacher education programs across the United States have created and are implementing assessment systems that include performance-based approaches, focusing not only on teaching and content knowledge but also on the application of this knowledge in practice (Wei & Pecheone, 2010).

Teacher education programs are where teacher candidates gain a foundation of knowledge about pedagogy and subject matter, as well as early exposure to practical classroom experience. Student teaching provides the opportunity for teacher candidates to use the culmination of skills and knowledge learned in coursework and previous field experiences in authentic settings. Research has demonstrated that a degree alone is insufficient to ensure teacher quality at the early-childhood level. Rather, it is the presence of that degree in combination with specialized training relating to classroom practice that results in quantifiable teacher-quality improvements (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Field experiences and clinical practice are considered the most important and most influential component of teacher preparation programs (Banks, 2015).

Performance-based assessment

The definition of performance-based assessments varies greatly depending on author, discipline, publication and intended audience (Palm, 2008). Performance-based learning and assessment outlines a framework for the acquisition and implementation of knowledge and skills through the performance of tasks that are meaningful and engaging to students. In teacher preparation programs, a performance task is any learning activity or assessment that requires students to perform and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and proficiency (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2013). Performance-based assessment is a method of evaluating learning and teaching during the student teaching experience that involves content, process and product (Hibbard, 1996; Shosh & Zales, 2007; Yildirim & Orsdemir, 2013). Content, process and product are what teachers address during the cycle of planning, instruction and assessment.

Performance assessments are typically evaluated using rubrics. Rubrics display indicators of performance on the selected evaluation criteria across a range of levels. Performance indicators are a means to focus on specific expectations of an assessment or observation. They are concrete, measurable performances students must meet as indicators of achievement. Rubrics give structure to performance-based assessments and observations and describe the performance that supports objective evaluations.

A goal of a performance-based assessments and observations of teacher candidates is to accurately identify a student's patterns of strengths and needs through multiple ratings. The measure of a teacher candidate's planning, instruction and assessment during their student teaching/practicum experience can be determined through a performance-based observation rubric. An observation rubric identifies the specific criteria that students must demonstrate through the use of multiple indicators of effectiveness and multiple ways to measure those indicators.

Early childhood teacher preparation and pre-service professional development support teacher candidates in developing specialized knowledge, skills, and practices that support the educational achievement of young children. To guide their decisions in planning, instruction and assessment for young children, early childhood teacher candidates need to understand the developmental changes that typically occur in the years from birth through age 8. Preparing early childhood teacher candidates to become effective, reflective practitioners, the supervised practicum/student teaching experience in early childhood education must be designed to support teacher candidates in applying the knowledge, theories and concepts acquired during their course of study. In addition, the experience should be aligned with the pedagogical knowledge, competence and dispositions that are evaluated through observations and performance-based assessments. In reviewing the components of an early childhood practicum observation rubric, this analysis sought to answer the question: Does a practicum-embedded observation rubric in a student teaching practicum course support the expectations and requirements of a teacher performance assessment?

Practicum in Early Childhood Course

Teacher candidates seeking certification in early childhood education (Birth-Grade 2) are required to enroll in a supervised practicum in early childhood near the completion of their graduate coursework. The practicum represents a bridge between the knowledge, skills, and dispositions developed through formal coursework and the practical application of those skills and knowledge into classroom practice. The practicum is an on-the-job experience and is taken by teacher candidates who are lead teachers, associate or assistant teachers in early childhood schools and programs. It is a college-supervised experience with a 15-hour seminar. See Appendix for course outline.

The 15-hour seminar is comprised of subject matter that includes: The developmental stages of teachers, reflective teaching, classroom and curriculum management, instructional strategies, documentation and assessment, child advocacy, and professional development. Each topic is led by a group of student teacher candidates who facilitate the discussion based on prior experiences, research and previous seminar discussions.

Practicum observation rubric

The teacher candidates are required to have an on-site observation by the seminar instructor and/or the field supervisor. Each candidate is also required to videotape a classroom lesson depicting the objectives of the learning goals. Prior to each lesson, teacher candidates are required to submit a lesson plan to the observer. The on-site and videotaped lessons are rated on an early childhood observation rubric.

There are seven categories on the practicum observation rubric that serve as a guide for evaluating teacher candidates' during their observed lessons. The practicum

observation evaluation is used to rate the teacher candidate's performance related to knowledge of learners; knowledge and use of subject matter; skill in planning; skill in teaching; skill in developing caring learning environments and showing respect for students; skill in assessment and impact on student learning; and commitment to teaching and professionalism.

NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs

Many higher education institutions choose to seek National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recognition of baccalaureate and graduate degrees as part of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation for programs leading to initial or advanced teacher licensure. These core NAEYC standards (see Table 1) guide the development of initial and advanced standards used for work in higher education accreditation. The 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs provide the basis for accreditation from the NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation or NAEYC recognition of baccalaureate and graduate programs as part of CAEP accreditation of schools, colleges, and departments of education (NAEYC, 2011). The Advanced Standards are used in graduate programs preparing candidates for leadership roles in the field as accomplished teachers, administrators, state early childhood specialists, child and family advocates, professional development specialists, teacher educators, and researchers. The standards apply across degree levels, varying in depth and breadth. For students already working in the field, these programs enhance current practice and build on professional preparation standards pathways. Each standard includes a key element requiring application of knowledge and skills through field or clinical experiences.

Teacher Performance Assessment

Stanford University faculty and staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) developed edTPA, formerly the Teacher Performance Assessment (SCALE, 2013). The edTPA is a pre-service assessment process that includes a review of a teacher candidate's authentic teaching materials as the culmination of a teaching and learning process that documents and demonstrates each candidate's ability to effectively teach his/her subject matter to all students.

The purpose of edTPA in Early Childhood is to measure teacher candidates' readiness to teach young children, ages 3–8 (SCALE, 2014). The assessment is designed with a focus on children's learning and principles from research and theory. It is based on findings that successful teachers:

- Develop knowledge of subject matter, content standards, and subject-specific pedagogy
- Develop and apply knowledge of varied children's needs
- Consider research and theory about how children learn

Reflect on and analyze evidence of the effects of instruction on children's learning (SCALE, 2014).

Table 1: Standards for early childhood professional preparation programs

Standard	Overview
Standard 1: Promoting Child Development and Learning	Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs are grounded in a child development knowledge base. They use their understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for each child.
Standard 2: Building Family and Community Relationships	Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children’s families and communities. They know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children’s families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and to involve all families in their children’s development and learning.
Standard 3: Observing, Documenting and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families	Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that child observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals. They know about and understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment. They know about and use systematic observations, documentation, and other effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to positively influence the development of every child.
Standard 4: Using Developmentally Effective Approaches	Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and its details vary depending on children’s ages, characteristics, and the settings within which teaching and learning occur. They understand and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for their work with young children and families. Candidates know, understand, and use a wide array of developmentally appropriate approaches, instructional strategies, and tools to connect with children and families and positively influence each child’s development and learning.
Standard 5: Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum	Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs use their knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for each and every young child. Candidates understand the importance of developmental domains and academic (or content) disciplines in early childhood curriculum. They know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas, including academic subjects, and can identify resources to deepen their understanding. Candidates use their own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curriculum that promotes comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for every young child.
Standard 6: Becoming a Professional	Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession. They know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives on their work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. They are informed advocates for sound educational practices and policies.
Standard 7: Early Childhood Field Experiences	Field experiences and clinical practice are planned and sequenced so that candidates develop the knowledge, skills and professional dispositions necessary to promote the development and learning of young children across the entire developmental period of early childhood – in at least two of the three early childhood age groups (birth – age 3, 3 through 5, 5 through 8 years) and in the variety of settings that offer early education (early school grades, child care centers and homes, Head Start programs).

The Early Childhood edTPA assessment is composed of three tasks: Planning for instruction and assessment; instructing and engaging children in learning; and assessing children's learning. Evidence of teaching practices is assessed on 15 rubrics. The edTPA is designed to engage teacher candidates in demonstrating their understanding of teaching and children's learning in authentic ways. EdTPA was not designed to take the place of faculty observations. Teacher preparation programs that use edTPA will continue to observe and assess teacher candidates and design their program and coursework as they always have. Course instructors and field supervisor's observations, along with assessments embedded across the preparation curriculum, ensure candidates gain the skills and knowledge to demonstrate their readiness for the classroom. Well-prepared candidates with the dispositions to teach are expected to perform well on this capstone assessment.

Methods

A constant comparative analysis was used for exploring the following data: edTPA task rubrics, practicum observation rubric categories and the NAEYC standards. The data were analyzed together by making connections between the categories as well as the subcategories. During the process of open and axial coding, the focus was on determining if and how the categories related to each other in terms of the context in which they were embedded. For example, if the edTPA Planning Task 1 rubrics aligned with the practicum observation category skill in planning and, if so, how they were connected to the NAEYC standards. This allowed for the opportunity to move back and forth amongst the data while continuously reviewing the categories and their interconnections. In addition, negative case analysis was also employed to look for classifications that did not conform to the categories.

The purpose of this study was to support an early childhood teacher preparation program in aligning a student teaching practicum observation rubric with the language and expectations of a teacher performance assessment. Although the findings from this study cannot be generalized to other teacher preparation programs, the results can guide other programs in developing performance-based observation rubrics that will support and prepare teacher candidates for certification exams and teacher performance assessments.

Results

Aligning the practicum observation rubric with edTPA evaluation criteria

The student teaching/practicum observation rubric used by field supervisors during teaching demonstrations required teacher candidates to demonstrate proficiency in categories that align with the cycle of teaching effectiveness identified in the edTPA. The 3 tasks in the edTPA Early Childhood represent a cycle of effective teaching: Planning, teaching and assessment. Planning Task 1 documents the intended teaching, Instruction Task 2 documents the enacted teaching, and Assessment Task 3 documents the impact of teacher candidates' teaching on children's learning (SCALE, 2014, p. 2).

The Planning Task 1 rubrics (1-5) aligned with the following practicum observation categories: Knowledge of learners, skill in planning, and skill in assessment and impact on student learning. The Instruction Task 2 rubrics (6-10) aligned with the following practicum observation categories: Knowledge and use of subject matter, skill in teaching, skill in developing caring learning environments and showing respect for

students, and commitment to teaching and professionalism. The Assessment Task rubrics (11-15) aligned with the following practicum observation categories: Knowledge of learners and skill in assessment and impact on student learning.

The discussion that follows outlines the alignment of the edTPA tasks with the specific observation rubrics used in the early childhood program. Each component of the teaching cycle is described and outlined with the edTPA task and corresponding rubric. The table following each section also depicts the alignment with the NAEYC standards.

Discussion

Planning for instruction and assessment

Planning is a continuous process that involves careful observation, identification of strengths and needs, assessment, and evaluation to support young children's development (McLachlan, Fler, & Edwards, 2013). Early childhood teacher candidates should understand how young learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the developmental domains. They are also expected to create and implement developmentally appropriate, challenging learning experiences to support learners at various developmental levels.

Learning experiences are outlined in lesson plans. A lesson plan is a guide for implementing a lesson and it includes the goals and objectives (what knowledge and/or skill the children are expected to acquire), how the goal will be reached (instructional facilitation, guidance, support, etc...) and a way of measuring how well the goal was reached (observations, authentic assessments, etc...). The early childhood teacher candidate plans instruction that supports all children in meeting learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, interdisciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as the multimodal nature of children's learning. The lesson plan details learning experiences that help children learn about themselves and the world around them. The lesson plan includes planned activities, materials and resources that support and guide children's development.

edTPA: Task 1

In Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment, early childhood teacher candidates describe their plans for a learning segment and explain how the learning experiences they have planned are appropriate for the children they are teaching (SCALE, 2014). Task 1 prepares teacher candidates to demonstrate and analyze the effectiveness of their planned learning segment.

Practicum observation rubric categories

Prior to each observed lesson, teacher candidates are required to submit a lesson plan to the seminar instructor and field supervisor. To ensure that early childhood teacher candidates' base their lessons and learning objectives on sound knowledge and understanding of young children's characteristics and needs, the lesson plan must address the content area and/or developmental domains that will be the focus of the activity, objectives and rationale for the lesson, connections to early learning guidelines and/or standards, and language objectives. The methods for assessing children's understanding, including a pre-assessment, assessment of student learning and assessment of children's language learning, must also be addressed in the teacher candidate's lesson plan. The

teacher candidate should also include a step-by-step procedure for implementation of the lesson along with resources and materials needed for the activity.

a. Knowledge of learners

In demonstrating their knowledge of young learners, early childhood teacher candidates are observed and rated on how they use language and present content that is appropriate to children's developmental and skill level. They are also assessed on how they use effective methods to challenge students to use higher order and critical thinking skills and their use of differentiated instruction to provide for individual students differences.

b. Skill in planning

In demonstrating their skill in planning, early childhood teacher candidates are required to create a lesson/activity plan that exhibit the required elements of the designated plan format and is delivered in the classroom in a highly effective manner. The teacher candidate's lesson plan is assessed on the lesson objectives being realistic, measurable, clearly stated and well connected to the observed lesson. The lesson plan is also assessed on how it sequences activities in a logical, developmental manner, explicitly making connections to prior knowledge and previewing upcoming content and/or activity.

c. Skill in assessment and impact on student learning

In demonstrating their use of assessment information to guide instruction, teacher candidates are observed and rated on how the instructional objectives in their plans align with assessment opportunities. They are also rated on how they adapt and adjust according to individual student need, and provides exceptionally helpful feedback to children while giving attention both to content and the individual child's thoughts about the subject.

Instructing and engaging children in learning

High quality learning environments are places where children are guided and supported in acquiring a strong foundation in the knowledge and skills needed for school success (Anders, Rossbach, Weinert, Ebert, Kuger, et al, 2012). Early childhood teachers guide children in learning activities appropriate for their skill and developmental level. In a high-quality learning environment, the early childhood teacher supports children in choosing activities and materials that will build their skills and conceptual knowledge. In order to provide the maximum support to children, early childhood teachers use their observations and documentation of children's work, interactions and behavior, using reliable instruments to assess appropriate skills and applying a system which helps them organize the learning environment and plan appropriate learning experiences. Teacher candidates facilitate learning by creating a developmentally appropriate environment, interesting materials, and providing adequate time to explore, play, and interact.

edTPA: Task 2

In Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Children in Learning, early childhood teacher candidates will demonstrate how they support and engage children in learning. Teacher candidates will be expected to develop learning environments that support children's engagement in interdisciplinary learning experiences that elicit and build on children's

responses. Teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate how they connect new content to children’s prior academic learning and personal, cultural, community, and developmental assets during their instruction.

Table 2: Planning alignment

edTPA: Task 1 Rubrics	Practicum Observation Rubric Category	Description of Performance (Sample from observation rubric)	NAEYC Standards
1. Planning for the Whole Child	1. Lesson Plan	Teacher candidate addresses the developmental domains that will be supported through lesson.	Standard 1 Standard 2
	2. Skill in Planning	Teacher candidate sequences activities in a logical, developmental manner, explicitly making connections to prior knowledge and previewing upcoming content/activity.	
2. Planning to Support Varied Learning Needs	Knowledge of Learners	Teacher candidate uses differentiated instruction to provide for individual children differences (e.g., different developmental levels, ELLs, and children with disabilities).	Standard 1 Standard 5
3. Using Knowledge of Children to Inform Teaching and Learning	Skill in Assessment and Impact on Student Learning	<p>6. Teacher candidate effectively uses a strategy to check if children understand information.</p> <p>7. Teacher candidate effectively uses assessment information to guide instruction, as appropriate.</p> <p>8. Teacher candidate appropriately matches assessments to instructional objectives.</p>	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5
4. Identifying and Supporting Language Development	Knowledge of Learners	Teacher candidate uses language appropriate to developmental and skill level.	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5
5. Planning Assessment to Monitor and Support Children’s Learning	Skill in Assessment and Impact on Student Learning	Teacher candidate appropriately matches assessments to instructional objectives.	Standard 3

Practicum observation rubric categories

a. Skill in developing caring, learning environments and showing respect for students.

In demonstrating their skill in developing a caring, learning environment, early childhood teacher candidates are assessed on how they use a variety of classroom management techniques to establish and maintain standards for an orderly classroom focused on learning and how they build a class community with significant opportunities for participation and student involvement.

b. Skill in teaching

Early childhood teacher candidates are rated on how they demonstrate a high level of expertise in their use of a range of motivational techniques that create a classroom of motivated learners. Teacher candidates are also rated on their use of pacing and lesson time to accomplish objectives, transition between activities, and lesson wrap up including a summary or assessment.

c. Knowledge and use of subject matter

In demonstrating their content knowledge, early childhood teacher candidates are rated on the accuracy of the information they provide on the subject matter, including relevant background or contextual information that exhibits strong mastery of content. They are also rated on the delivery of the lesson activity which includes key concepts, themes, and skills that are related to the subject area, worth teaching, and substantially build on children's prior knowledge.

d. Commitment to teaching and professionalism

During post observation conferences and reflection, the teacher candidates is rated on their willingness to accept critiques of the observed lesson and, in subsequent observations, shows considerable progress in areas suggested.

Assessing children's learning

During the early childhood years, the purpose of assessing young children is to collect the data necessary to make decisions about their development and to document their progress and needs (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2013). To successfully support children's growth and learning, early childhood teachers need to know where children are performing according to developmental and age appropriate guidelines. They create and select appropriate assessments for learning and make use of a variety of techniques to differentiate assessment strategies for diverse learners. The assessment should be tailored for a specific purpose and should be reliable, valid, and fair for that purpose. Assessment strategies should be age and developmentally appropriate as well as culturally sensitive and provide valid information for planning, instruction and authentic assessment.

edTPA: Task 3

In Task 3: Assessing Children's Learning, early childhood teacher candidates will analyze children's learning and their language use. Teacher candidates will gather evidence and make sense of what children have learned; discuss how they provide meaningful feedback to children, and use evidence of what children know and are able to do to plan next steps in instruction. Teacher candidates will also be required to gather

evidence of children’s language use that demonstrates their language and literacy development.

Table 3: Instruction alignment

edTPA: Task 2 Rubrics	Practicum Observation Rubric Category	Description of Performance (Sample from observation rubric)	NAEYC Standards
6. Learning Environment	Skill in Developing Caring Learning Environments and Showing Respect for Students	Teacher candidate shows exceptional rapport, which is relaxed, focused on learning rather than discipline, and reciprocated by students.	Standard 1 Standard 5
7. Engaging Children in Learning	Skill in Teaching	Teacher candidate shows a high level of expertise by using a range of motivational techniques that create a classroom of motivated learners.	Standard 1 Standard 5
8. Deepening Children’s Learning	Skill in Teaching	Teacher candidate uses highly effective questioning strategies to elicit student responses at the literal, analytical, and critical thinking levels and encourage students to express different points of view.	Standard 1 Standard 5
9. Subject Specific Pedagogy	Knowledge and Use of Subject Matter	Teacher candidate uses a range of highly effective subject-specific pedagogical tools that make a strong impact on student learning.	Standard 5
10. Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness	Commitment to Teaching & Professionalism	Teacher candidate purposefully analyzes lesson's strengths and identifies specific strategies about how to enhance teaching.	Standard 5 Standard 6

Practicum observation rubric categories

a. Knowledge of learners

Early childhood teacher candidates are rated on how they present content appropriate to the developmental and skill level of children and how they reference a range of content to support learners at various levels.

b. Skill in assessment and impact on student learning

In demonstrating their skill in assessment, early childhood teacher candidates are assessed on how they effectively use strategies to check if children understand information being presented and how they use assessment information to guide instruction. Early childhood teacher candidates are also assessed on how they provide

feedback that is appropriately related to content and children’s thinking and how the assessments match instructional goals and objectives. To determine their impact on student learning, early childhood teacher candidates are assessed on how children demonstrate satisfactory achievement of objectives and/or have made satisfactory progress towards those goals.

Table 4: Assessment alignment

edTPA: Task 3 Rubrics	Practicum Observation Rubric Category	Description of Performance (Sample from observation rubric)	NAEYC Standards
11. Analysis of Children’s Learning	Skill in Assessment and Impact on Student Learning	Teacher candidate is highly effective at using a variety of strategies to check if children understand information and uses assessment information to guide instruction.	Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5
12. Providing Feedback to Guide Learning	Skill in Assessment and Impact on Student Learning	Teacher candidate provides exceptionally helpful feedback to children, giving attention both to content and the individual child’s thoughts about the subject.	Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5
13. Children’s Use of Feedback	Skill in Assessment and Impact on Student Learning	Teacher candidate provides helpful feedback to children that are appropriately related to content and children’s thoughts.	Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5
14. Analyzing Children’s Language development	Knowledge of Learners	Teacher candidate uses language appropriate to developmental and skill level and introduces more advanced language.	Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5
15. Using Assessments to Inform Instruction	Skill in Assessment and Impact on Student Learning	Teacher candidate appropriately matches assessments to instructional objectives and adapts them according to individual student need.	Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5

Field experience and performance assessment

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, now known as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation-CAEP) state that structured and systematic field experiences are viewed as essential to teacher programs and is a critical feature for effectively preparing teachers for the classroom (NCATE, 2010). Although there are differences in objectives and organization and variations in procedures and policies among teacher education programs, teacher education programs recognize the importance of a planned, sequenced, and systematic field experience (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Performance-based assessments that develop and measure pre-service teachers effectiveness during the student teaching/practicum experience have high-quality preparation and authentic evaluation embedded in the practice, in both the seminar sessions and in the field experiences. The observation and performance assessment of the early childhood teacher candidates' field experiences documents evidence of the sustained proficiency in integrating their knowledge, skill, and disposition routinely, consistently and intentionally during planning, instruction and assessment to support children's learning at all developmental levels.

Observation rubrics and performance assessment

High-quality teacher education programs' field experiences include assessment of a candidate's performance not only to evaluate a candidate's performance at the end of each field experience, but also to assess the candidate's professional practice of knowledge and skills during the experience (Sandholtz & Shea, 2012). Using an early childhood observation rubric during the student teaching/practicum experience as an objective method for measuring learning and teaching provides a framework for giving constructive, focused feedback that supports teacher candidates. A well-designed rubric can provide teacher candidates with more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement. The observation rubric used in the teacher preparation program provides a comprehensive, coherent set of criteria for teacher candidates' work that incorporates descriptions of the performance levels that determines the quality on identified standards. Used appropriately, rubrics can be instructional tools that support learning and professional growth at all stages of teacher development.

Rubrics can be shared with teacher candidates at the beginning of the semester to ensure that learning requirements have been clearly communicated and understood by students. These guidelines, with transparent expectations outlined, helps to guide them with planning and monitoring their own work as they progress through the practicum/student teaching experience. The progressions on the rubric allow teacher candidates to identify their strengths and areas in need of improvement more readily.

Although rubrics require an initial investment of time, aligning observation rubrics with the requirements of teacher performance assessments provides teacher candidates with valuable information about the expectations of the examinations and assessments required for initial teacher certification. Teacher candidates can use this knowledge to further develop their skills and abilities in teaching and instruction. This information can provide them with the opportunity to analyze their own work and progress to determine not only how they are advancing towards the expectations of the teacher performance assessment, but also in how they are developing in their professional and personal development.

Conclusion

Traditional teacher preparation programs prepare teacher candidates to complete coursework on psychological principles, subject matter, and teaching methods before meaningfully interacting with P-12 teachers and students, providing for few connections between the act of teaching and course content (Banks, Jackson & Harper, 2014). Learning theory in isolation from practice and having brief encounters with classroom practice divorced from theory, further contributes to the gap between research and practice (Ravitch, 2008). The analysis from this study suggest that early childhood

teacher preparation programs should continuously examine how faculty are introducing professional teaching standards, performance-based assessment and evaluation instruments in the teacher preparation program. Faculty should consistently connect content and pedagogical knowledge, instruction and assessment skills, and classroom and curriculum management with authentic contexts for learning in the required foundation and method courses. By providing a common framework for planning, instruction and assessment under which early childhood teacher candidates are evaluated, and aligning a performance-based observation rubric, the teacher preparation program is able to ensure that students have the necessary skills and knowledge to be highly effective educators of young children.

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