

# An Instrument to Study State-Wide Implementation of edTPA: Validating the Levels of edTPA Integration Survey

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*Use of edTPA for preservice teacher assessment is becoming increasingly common across the country, with some states, including Georgia, mandating the passing of the edTPA for initial teacher licensure. This state-wide study investigated whether edTPA as a new policy initiative was being integrated by the teacher education programs and faculty in their practice. The edTPA Levels of Integration (LoI) Survey was sent to faculty, eliciting 145 responses. Results showed that the integration of edTPA was significantly higher at the program level than in faculty's personal practice and that, most aspects of edTPA were currently being used at the mechanical level. The five-factor solution from the exploratory factor analysis and a high Cronbach's alpha showed that this survey is internally consistent and a valid measure for measuring edTPA faculty's LoI. These factors were robust and strong constructs for understanding faculty's use of edTPA both at the program level and the individual faculty level.*

*Keywords: teacher education policy, edTPA implementation, faculty use of edTPA, survey validation*

The trends in P-12 education related to accountability and testing have had a profound impact on teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2010). A national portfolio assessment (edTPA) is now being pushed as a valid and reliable assessment of preservice teachers' readiness to teach (SCALE, 2013) and is already being used across 30 states for different purposes. Policy changes in teacher education program requirements involving the use of this tool as a high-stakes assessment have been met with both enthusiasm and concerns from faculty, preservice teachers, and other stakeholders. Advocates argue for the need for a performance assessment to set the bar for expectations for beginning teachers, while critics find standardization of teacher preparation and the outsourcing of evaluation to a corporate entity problematic (Sato, 2014). As states have moved toward the adoption of new policies requiring edTPA, institutions of higher education have been faced with the need to provide intensive faculty professional development and to consider extensive curricular redesign to ensure candidates are prepared with the professional knowledge and expertise to succeed. In Georgia, policy changes resulted in all institutions of higher education being required to implement edTPA in their programs during the 2014-2015 school year, with the assessment results becoming consequential for certification beginning in fall 2015.

In spring 2015, an edTPA Levels of Integration (LoI) survey was developed and distributed to 453 edTPA faculty in 35 institutions across Georgia. The edTPA LoI was designed to explain the behaviors of people involved in implementing an innovation (Hall & Hord, 2015)—in this case, implementing curricular changes related to elements of the edTPA assessment. Although there was an expectation that the institutions would pilot edTPA within their programs and make design and delivery changes in preparation for fall 2015, the level of integration of edTPA within programs and faculty members' personal practice was likely to be

inconsistent during the implementation year. We were interested in finding out what aspects of edTPA were being integrated in the year prior to the consequential year, to what extent, and what factors contributed to the different levels of integration.

In order for researchers to determine whether a new policy initiative is successful, it is important to know how the change is being implemented by the key players in their practice, at the grass-roots level (Hall, 2010; Overbaugh & Lu, 2008). In this study, teacher education faculty who were teaching methods and/or practicum courses or supervising student teaching in their programs were the key implementers of the edTPA policy. The edTPA LoI instrument was adapted from two constructs, (a) levels of use, and (b) innovation configuration, drawn from the concerns-based adoption model (Hall, 2010).

The Levels of Use (LOU) construct complicates the *use/non-use* dichotomy, and provides varying levels and degrees of behaviors exhibited by the users of an innovation (Hall & Hord, 2015). There are three possible kinds of levels of use in the non-users category and five different kinds of users. The construct of innovation mapping focuses specifically on the nature of content or activities undertaken during implementation of an innovation. Items for the edTPA LoI related to the extent to which faculty had been involved in the integration of edTPA and included a listing of potential components of what such integration might entail. We also examined questionnaires sent to edTPA coordinators by the state agency responsible for the policy change of edTPA becoming an initial licensure requirement. In preparation for the implementation year, the state agency's edTPA policy committee and area coordinators surveyed institutions to understand the nature of their involvement in edTPA activities and what might be done to support their progress. Components addressed in these questionnaires were used as the basis for creation of items for the present survey.

We created a 6-level edTPA LoI survey (see Appendix A) consisting of two aspects: LoI at the program level and LoI at the individual faculty level, within courses. We envision the edTPA LoI model as following a developmental trajectory; as faculty learn more about edTPA, the extent of the information they have and the degree to which they integrate change in their personal practice determines their movement along these developmental stages. Given the national trends in adopting the edTPA as a high-stakes assessment (Sato, 2014), it is critical to understand how edTPA is being integrated within the programs and also within faculty members' personal practices.

We hypothesize that LoI at the program and individual faculty level could be different. It is possible for a program to recommend its use, but personal philosophies, concerns, or other circumstances can obstruct integration of edTPA components in faculty practice. Conversely, an individual faculty member may have the motivation to try out edTPA, but the overall acceptance for edTPA may be lesser at the program level. Awareness about edTPA integration at the program and faculty's personal levels would provide information about Georgia's status of edTPA preparation prior to the consequential year, in addition to determining the professional development needs of the faculty.

Because the edTPA LoI survey did not have an established reliability and validity, this study addressed the following research questions: (a) Is the edTPA LoI a valid and reliable measure of faculty's integration of edTPA?, and (b) How do edTPA faculty describe their integration of edTPA, both within their programs and their personal practice?

Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine how teacher education faculty respond to policy implementation, and how policy is integrated within the program and personal practices of the faculty who were responsible for teaching the courses most impacted by edTPA. The LoI

survey can potentially serve as a tool to understand integration of policy components at the program and course level, and can help facilitation of professional development to address specific needs of faculty.

### Literature Review

Implementation of educational reform is complex. In order to evaluate whether a reform is successful, a more nuanced understanding of the degree to which the reform is being used at the grass-roots level is needed (Hall, 2010; Overbaugh & Lu, 2008). edTPA LoI is grounded in previous research about the concerns-based adoption model of an innovation, which leads us to suggest that faculty's integration of edTPA will be related to the degree to which faculty use aspects of edTPA in their courses, make changes in curriculum, and integrate it within their practices (Hall, 2010; Hall, Dirksen, & George, 2008). The edTPA LoI complicates the *use/non-use* dichotomy and provides a more complete understanding of the nature of edTPA integration within program and faculty's personal practice. Such nuanced information on impact of edTPA roll-out on the practice of teacher educators is valuable for policymakers as it allows for deeper understanding of how edTPA integration will unfold in a state if it is used for high-stakes. For instance, within the *non-use* realm, it is helpful to understand if a faculty member is integrating edTPA at the *orientation* stage or the *preparation* state. Similarly, the distinction among *users* is important to understand because the faculty at the *mechanical* level would be using edTPA very differently as compared to faculty at the *refinement* or *integration* stages. The *mechanical* stage is characterized by insufficient mastery over the innovation and disjointed use, with focus on complying with the demands, and making adaptations in personal work and time to fit the innovation in their schedule. In contrast, the *refinement* and *integration* stages are characterized by an understanding of the big-picture and the context of change. At this stage, faculty's focus

shifts away from themselves as implementers of the change to seeking benefit for their students and making adaptations in their practice informed by assessment data. Based on this information, targeted professional development and support can be provided to faculty to facilitate their movement into the *user* realm, ideally helping them reach the *refinement* stage (Hall & Hord, 2015).

Teacher education has long relied on locally developed assessments that lack reliability and validity (Castle, & Shaklee, 2006; Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, & Ronfeldt, 2008). Rigorous performance-based assessments for preservice teachers have been advanced as one possible way to ensure that all students receive instruction from a high-quality teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2010). edTPA is a performance-based assessment focusing on the application of knowledge of teaching and learning in a classroom setting (Wei & Pecheone, 2010). Currently, 640 educator preparation programs in 35 states are participating in edTPA use (SCALE, 2015). Across states, variations are evident with respect to edTPA use. Some states use this assessment for certification, others for program approval, while some others for both. Additionally, different states have determined different cut-off scores to signify a passing performance on edTPA; there has also been variation in the timeline for implementation of edTPA as a policy in these states, prior to edTPA scores becoming consequential.

The implementation of edTPA has been especially controversial because of critiques from the field about the developmental appropriateness of the edTPA tasks for preservice teachers, minimizing collaborative nature of learning in interaction with the cooperating teacher and the field supervisor, and its replacement with high-stakes, labor intensive portfolio (Lit & Lotan, 2013; Margolis & Doring, 2013). Furthermore, the directions about the appropriate levels of support that the faculty or supervisors can afford to the teacher candidates during the edTPA

portfolio development phase has been inconsistently understood and utilized by the field, adding to the confusion about appropriate uses of instruction around edTPA (Gitomer & Bell, 2013; Okhremtchouk, Newell, & Rosa, 2013; Sandholtz & Shea, 2012). However, in a state where the policy has been issued for edTPA to be used for licensure, the faculty have limited options but to prepare the candidates for this assessment. The concerns about edTPA voiced by others in the field, in addition to their personal concerns about the edTPA can obstruct faculty's integration of edTPA in their practices.

Because the edTPA is a relatively new assessment and had morphed from its previous version: PACT and TPA (SCALE, 2013), research is still coming out about the process and consequences of the use of edTPA for high-stakes. The trend of edTPA's state-wide consequential use is also recent, and there is a lack of research in the field to guide edTPA implementation across universities and programs. There is also a need for survey instruments and protocols that focus specifically on edTPA as a policy, and the challenges it poses for the teacher education community in identifying areas needing support and professional development to facilitate smoother transition to policy.

### **Methods**

Next, we describe the edTPA LoI survey, which has 6 levels of integration and describes integration of edTPA within the program and at the level of individual faculty members' personal practice.

### **Measures**

The edTPA LoI online survey included items constructed in light of the Levels of Use (LoU) instrument (Hall, Dirksen, & George, 2008), as well as research about how configurations of an innovation can be described (Hall, 2010). Utilizing items from a state questionnaire sent to

edTPA coordinators describing institutional activities and needs, we developed 19 questions and situated them within the level of use and innovation configuration constructs (Hall & Hord, 2015). Questions 1-10 focused on LoI at program level, while questions 11- 19 focused on faculty's personal LoI (Appendix A). The questions for the program LoI were parallel to the personal LoI (except question 1). Responses from these 19 items were expected to provide insight into faculty's behavior in relation to edTPA use (Hall, et al., 2008). These items were rated on a six-point Likert Scale (Nonuse: 1, Orientation: 2, Preparation: 3, Mechanical Use: 4, Refinement: 5, and Integration: 6). The progression on the 6-level scale was developmental and reflected the stages of integration individuals go through when faced with a new innovation. Levels 1-3 were within the realm of *non-use* but included different levels of awareness/preparation, while Level 4-6 represented varying levels of use (Hall, 2010).

In addition, we also asked the faculty responding to the survey to provide some background information, which included: name of the edTPA handbook they used in their courses, the size of institution (based on the number of initial teacher preparation graduates reported in Title II), and the roles that these faculty played in their institutions (student teaching supervisor, methods course instructor, or both). Our hypothesis was that edTPA integration might look different across the different edTPA content handbooks, across small and large institutions in the state, and might also be different when faculty played different roles in their institutions.

### **Participants**

A total of 453 teacher education faculty in 35 institutions across the state of Georgia were e-mailed the online edTPA LoI survey. A total of 145 faculty responded to the survey in spring 2015. As shown in Table 1, the responses represented faculty perspectives on integrating a



variety of the edTPA content handbooks: elementary, middle grades, secondary (English, Math, Science and Social Studies), special education, and P-12 (art, music, foreign language, and physical education). Some of the faculty were involved in integration of more than one edTPA handbooks.

Table 1.

*edTPA Handbooks Used by Faculty*

Programs	N
Elementary	61
Middle Grades Math	30
Social Studies	34
English	32
Science	31
Secondary English	34
Math	25
Science	28
Social Studies	36
Special Education	15
P-12 (art, music, foreign language, and physical education)	38

### Analyses

We conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to examine how well the items clustered together and whether survey items measured what they were expected to measure. Prior to conducting EFA, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of Sphericity assessed the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

In order to find an optimal number of factors, we assessed cumulative percentage of variance and eigenvalue (>1.0), scree plot and model fit indices (e.g., *RMSEA*, *CFI*, *TLI*) using two software programs: SPSS (v. 20) and Mplus (Ver.7) (Muthen & Muthen, 1998). In this analysis, we applied an oblique promax rotation. In order to determine the model fit and the factor retention, the criteria of *RMSEA* values between 0.05 and 0.08, *CFI* (>0.90), and *TLI*

(>0.90), were considered as acceptable fit indices (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999; Garver & Mentzer, 1999). A reliability analysis was also conducted to confirm the consistency of items within each factor. Then we conducted the pair-wise comparison of Levels of Integration, in order to examine the difference how edTPA faculty describe their integration of edTPA within their program and their personal practice.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Analysis**

Responses to the 19 questions were examined for normal distribution using descriptive statistics. Missing values were dealt with list-wise deletion as a default option. Based on the criteria of  $|2.0|$  for skewness and  $|7.0|$  kurtosis (Chou & Bentler, 1995; Curran, West, & Finch, 1996), none of items showed violations of normality (Table 2) and an approximately normal distribution was evident for the data.