Note: Snapshot PDF is the proof copy of corrections marked in EditGenie, the layout would be different from typeset PDF and EditGenie editing view.

Author Queries & Comments:

Q1: Please note that the ORCID has/have been created from information provided through CATS. Please check if this is inaccurate.
Response: Need to add is possible: ORCID for Shelley Holden is 0000-0002-0655-3330; ORCID for Nick O’Leary is 0000-0001-9597-522X

Q2: The reference “Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, n.d.” is cited in the text but is not listed in the references list. Please either delete the in-text citation or provide full reference details following journal style.
Response: This can be removed from the manuscript

Q3: The disclosure statement has been inserted. Please check if this is inaccurate.
Response: This is correct.

Q4: The reference “State of [concealed] Department of Education, 2016” is listed in the references list but is not cited in the text. Please either cite the reference or remove it from the references list.
Response: This can be removed from the manuscript

Q5: Please provide complete details for reference “State of [concealed] Department of Education, 2016”
Response: This can be removed from the manuscript

Teacher candidate perceptions of the edTPA in physical and health education

Recto running head: CURRICULUM STUDIES IN HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Verso running head: S. L. HOLDEN ET AL

Shelley L. Holden, Craig Parkes, Nick O’Leary [Q1]

a Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL, USA
b Faculty of Education, Health and Well-Being, Institute of Human Sciences, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, UK

CONTACT Craig Parkes cparkes@southalabama.edu

Copyright Line: © 2020 Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to investigate physical and health education teacher candidate's perceptions of factors influencing effective implementation of edTPA at one teacher preparation program in the Southeastern United States. The participants were six physical and health education teacher candidates who had recently completed the edTPA portfolio. In line with the principles of case study methodology data were collected through the application of a Qualtrics survey, followed by focus group and one-on-one interviews. NVivo 11 Pro software package was employed to analyse data using analytic induction and constant comparison techniques. The analysis revealed that the factors that influenced participant experiences of the edTPA fell into four themes: (a) tandem cooperating teachers and teacher candidates' edTPA learning, (b) essential faculty support, (c) boot camp workshop support, and (d) effective mock submissions. The study reveals that there are a number of strategic interventions that can improve the effectiveness of edTPA programs. These include, but are not limited to, targeted training for cooperating teachers, involving physical and health education faculty in boot camp workshops, and assigning mock edTPA assignments during methods courses.

KEYWORDS

- EdTPA
- teaching performance assessment
- physical education teacher education
- health education teacher education
The edTPA portfolio is an external assessment tool used by 41 States and 920 Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) to assess teacher candidates (TCs) readiness to teach in the United States of America (edTPA, 2020). The edTPA is the first nationally available, educator-designed performance assessment for TCs entering the profession (SCALE, 2016). Developed by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), the portfolio assessment is administered during the culminating semester of attendance when TCs are completing their student teaching experience. edTPA was designed to improve the assessment of TCs and ultimately reform and distinguish teaching as a profession (Seymour, Burns, & Henry, 2018). Candidates who score well on the edTPA portfolio are expected to be effective teachers in the future (Seymour et al., 2018).

The edTPA portfolio contains three tasks that TCs must complete, wherein each task is scored separately. Tasks contain a series of rubrics based on a 5-point scoring system with 5 signifying the TC is ready to teach (SCALE, 2016). Task 1, Planning for Instruction and Assessment, focuses on TCs ability to complete the planning process related to their learning segment, which consists of three to five consecutive lessons. In this task TCs work with their cooperating teacher (CT) to select a class to teach, the learning segment to be planned, taught, and assessed along with developing learning tasks, instructional strategies and assessment for students with diverse needs. There are five rubrics in this section that assess the following areas: 1. Planning for Learning; 2. Planning to Support Varied Student Learning Needs; 3. Using Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching and Learning; 4. Identifying and Supporting Language Demands; 5. Planning Assessments to Monitor and Support Student Learning.

Task 2, Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning, focuses on the TCs instruction. In this task, TCs record their teaching and interactions with students. The CT assists in obtaining parental permission for the learning segment to be recorded. Two recorded video clips, totalling less than 20-minutes, are required to be submitted. The TCs are assessed in the following areas: 1. Learning Environment; 2. Engaging Students in Learning; 3. Deepening Student Learning; 4. Subject-Specific Pedagogy; 5. Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness (SCALE, 2016).

Task 3, Assessing Student Learning, focuses on the TCs ability to assess student learning. The CT assists the TC by defining the criteria for evaluation, selecting work samples from three students (one of which must be a student with a specific learning need), and helping determine feedback for selected students. In this task, TCs are assessed on the following rubrics: 1. Analysis of Student Learning; 2. Providing Feedback to Guide Further Learning; 3. Student Use of Feedback; 4. Analyzing Students’ Language Use; 5. Using Assessment to Inform Instruction (SCALE, 2016).

A passing score on this portfolio is 37 for both physical and health education in the State of investigation. Although many institutions do not tie passing scores to graduation, some institutions do, meaning TCs cannot graduate from their bachelor’s program without obtaining a passing edTPA score. edTPA portfolio passing scores vary from State to State and by subject area, with TCs requiring a successful edTPA passing score in order to obtain their teaching license. The United States is not the only country that has implemented a teaching performance assessment (TPA) prior to graduation and certification. Australia, for example, assesses teacher candidates during their final year of teacher preparation (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, n.d. [Q2]; Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2018). While the Australian TPA is similar to the edTPA in terms of expectations relating to TCs’ providing evidence of planning, teaching, assessing, and reflection which aligns with professional standards, a major difference between the two countries is that the Australian TPA is not outsourced for examination purposes (Stacey, Talbot, Buchanan, & Mayer, 2019). Assistance for TCs completing the edTPA is also specific to the United States.

Faculty and CTs are encouraged to help TCs examine expectations for edTPA performance. They are also allowed to discuss how TCs will demonstrate their performance in relation to the edTPA expectations (SCALE, 2016). That is, faculty and CTs may take time to examine the language, structure and progress through the edTPA portfolio development and submission. However, some examples of unacceptable support include, editing a TCs edTPA drafts, offering a critique of TCs edTPA drafts that provides specific alternative responses, and/or advising TCs on which video clips or work samples to submit (SCALE, 2016).

**Teacher candidate, faculty, and cooperating teacher perceptions of edTPA**

Prior research into the edTPA process has determined TCs perceive it to be overwhelming and confusing (Lunsford, Warner, Park, & Morgan, 2016; Margolis & Doring, 2013; Meuwissen, Choppin, Shang-Butler, & Cloonan, 2015). In addition, TCs have stressed that focusing on edTPA made them a better student but not necessarily a better teacher (Margolis & Doring, 2013). According to Burns, Henry, and Lindauer (2015) TCs felt that, being proactive, focusing on rubrics, having strict deadlines and methods course alignment, were all important to their edTPA success. Further to this, Behney (2016) observed that TCs perceived the amount of guidance provided by their cooperating teacher had an impact on their edTPA performance. Unfortunately, TCs typically reported a lack of support from CTS, especially during the early/pilot stages when both parties were learning about edTPA together (Burns et al., 2015; Lunsford et al., 2016). Heil and Berg (2017) report that TCs often experienced feeling detached from CTS and students which manifest as, a perceived loss of individuality, too much focus on teaching to the test, and feeling abandoned by university
faculties. For their part, faculties attempting to use edTPA have reported difficulties and concerns. Wetherington (2013) revealed that university faculty members and TCs were generally learning about edTPA simultaneously. While university faculty appeared to learn quickly working alongside TCs, this is not ideal preparation for assisting their students. Lindauer, Burns, and Henry (2013) found that faculty involved in pilot studies felt they required further information, despite receiving formal training. Additional faculty concerns include a loss of academic freedom, confusion regarding appropriate faculty support, and unrealistic timelines (Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013; Margolis & Doring, 2013; Parkes & Powell, 2015). University faculties are not the only support personnel for TCs completing edTPA, as CTs also play a pivotal role in the completion of edTPA.

CTs have expressed the opinion that the edTPA is a relevant assessment but were not convinced that as a licensing requirement it improved the student teaching experience, given the heavy administrative workload for students (Seymour et al., 2018). Nonetheless, CTs have argued that taking part in edTPA professional development workshops can positively impact TCs and their edTPA scores (Kisaa, Hart, & Algozine, 2019). CTs have been found to want to learn more about edTPA and the level of input they are allowed to provide TCs (Burns et al., 2015). This may not be totally surprising given half of CTs reported receiving inadequate information and limited training which often resulted in confusion for the CTs and the TCs (Burns et al., 2015; Seymour et al., 2018).

Study rationale

The warrant for this study emerges from the fact that previous studies into the edTPA have not had physical and health education teacher education (PHETE) as their focus. The little insight that has been gathered around PHETE TCs and CTs has it as part of a wider sample of education subjects. Consequently, publications specifically focusing on the edTPA in the areas of physical and health education consist of primarily practitioner recommendations. Such non-empirical best-practice recommendations for PHETE include, understanding edTPA academic language (Davis & Wash, 2019; Martin, Klinkenborg, & Wetherington, 2018) and providing planning tips for TCs, CTs, and program faculty (Grant & Sanderson, 2016; Olson, O'Neil, & Sazama, 2019; Treadwell, Cameron, & Manson, 2017). The lack of empirical research on PHETE edTPA is conspicuous by its absence and needs to be addressed if TC preparation is to be enhanced within this field. To this end, the purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore physical and health education TCs perceptions of factors influencing effective implementation of edTPA within one teacher preparation program in the Southeastern United States.

Method

Participants

At the point of data collection in Fall 2019, a total of nine TCs had completed the edTPA in physical or health education at our institution. Following ethical approval from the university institutional review board, recruitment scripts were emailed out to all nine TCs who met the eligibility criteria for inclusion in this study. Six TCs responded to the recruitment email and participated in this exploratory case study. The participants were physical education (n=5) and health education (n=1) TCs who had completed the edTPA portfolio as an undergraduate requirement since it was piloted in the State of investigation. Two of the participants had passed the edTPA and completed student teaching requirements during the Fall 2019 semester, and were officially graduating the following week. Two of the participants had graduated during the 2018-2019 academic year. The edTPA was pilot tested at the institution between Spring 2017 and Spring 2018, and two graduates from this cohort also participated in the study. Four of the participants were male, and two were female. Pseudonyms are used in the presentation of the participant data.

Setting

The research setting was an accredited PHETE program at a public university located in the Southeastern United States. The P-12 physical education teacher certification curriculum at this institution is underpinned by health and fitness, methods courses, sports skills, dance, gymnastics and assessment. All TCs must complete 150 h of observation and supervised teaching, with 50 h of elementary school physical education, 50 h of middle school physical education and 50 h of high school health education. The health education teacher certification curriculum is designed to educate TCs so that school students can achieve optimal health for life. It utilises a skills-based approach in order to prepare TCs to obtain, interpret and understand basic health information and services with the ultimate goal of increasing functional health knowledge and identifying key skills applicable to all aspects of healthy living. Health education TCs complete 100 h of observation and supervised teaching in a high school health classroom. All physical and health education TCs must complete 15 weeks of student teaching and achieve a passing score of 37 or more on the edTPA portfolio to graduate and obtain their teaching license.

edTPA institutional procedures

The higher education institution in focus in this study used the following model. First, during methods courses in both physical
and health education TCs complete edTPA mock assignments that parallel the rigour of the edTPA portfolio. This approach aligns with the findings of Burns et al. (2015), where TCs suggested that methods course content and edTPA components should be better connected. The TCs are scheduled to take these methods courses during their junior and senior year and have to complete a minimum of 50 field hours of observations and teaching in a school setting as a course requirement. Mock assignments are strategically planned to closely replicate tasks one through three of the edTPA portfolio. Examples of edTPA mock assignments include collecting school and student demographic information, describing the central focus of the lesson, explaining how student observations have influenced lesson planning, planning and evaluating student assessment, obtaining parental consent to video record taught lessons, and analysing and reflecting on video recordings of these teaching experiences. At a minimum, TCs have at least two opportunities prior to their student teaching experience to prepare for edTPA by competing mock assignments related to tasks one through three.

During student teaching, TCs attend compulsory boot camp workshops that were developed by the Institution’s College of Education irrespective of subject (elementary education, mathematics, science, for example). The workshops support TCs with edTPA expectations, assignments, resources, and timelines. The overarching focus of the boot camps is to build the portfolio and self-assess the components of edTPA. Boot camps are led by the College of Education edTPA coordinator, with faculty members and student teaching supervisors often in attendance. There are five boot camps, lasting approximately 23 h in total spread, across the first eight weeks of the student teaching semester. Examples of boot camp content includes acceptable and unacceptable levels of student support, reviewer expectations, the edTPA submission, and instructions on tasks one through three. Failure to prepare for each boot camp can result in a reduction of the TCs final letter grade for student teaching.

Data sources

The researchers primarily employed a qualitative approach for this exploratory case study. The research was split into two phases, and three sources of data collection consistent with prior edTPA research investigating TCs perceptions were utilised during the data collection period (see Behney, 2016; Heil & Berg, 2017; Lunsford et al., 2016). In phase one an anonymous online Qualtrics survey link that contained questions requiring quantitative and qualitative responses related to edTPA experiences was emailed to all eligible participants as part of the recruitment script. Questions and statements were developed from an extensive examination of edTPA literature, a comparable music education study (Heil & Berg, 2017), and the edTPA experiences of the investigators who are assistant and associate professors in the PHETE program at the institution. Quantitative statements and qualitative questions focused on edTPA requirements, timelines, individuals who offered edTPA support, undergraduate course content, boot camps, and the influence of edTPA on teacher development. Examples of quantitative statements include, ‘I felt supported as I worked through the edTPA,’ and ‘The edTPA was a useful tool in my development as a teacher.’ A Likert scale of Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; and Strongly Disagree was used to record participant’s quantitative responses. Examples of open ended text entry qualitative questions include, ‘what components of boot camp did you find most and least useful?’ and ‘What advice would you give to a student teacher completing edTPA?’ The survey contained nine quantitative statements, and 14 qualitative questions, and all six participants completed this survey.

In phase two one semi-structured focus group discussion was conducted two weeks after the survey results had been collected and analysed. One participant could not attend the focus group meeting and agreed to participate in a one-to-one interview. The focus group discussion took place with three participants and lasted 60 min. The one-to-one interview lasted 30 min. The interview questions were developed from key themes that were evident during the preliminary open and axial coding of the Qualtrics survey data collected during phase one. One example is that several survey participants mentioned working on the edTPA portfolio late at night after a full day of teaching and planning. As a result of this theme the researchers developed the following focus group/one-to-one interview question, ‘how did you keep yourself motivated when working on the edTPA portfolio?’ A second example question was developed because several survey responses that the component of edTPA that focused on student assessment helped them the most in developing as a teacher. However, they did not provide any real detail about why they felt this way. Therefore, the question, ‘can you provide some specific examples of how edTPA Task 3 (assessment commentary) helped you to develop as a teacher?’ was included to obtain richer data about this observation. All interviews were audio recorded, with recordings immediately being transcribed into text using transcription software. The investigators proofread and edited transcripts prior to beginning data analysis by listening to audio files and reading through the transcript simultaneously. If the transcript text was incorrect the investigators made the necessary verbatim corrections.

Data analysis

From the survey data analysis descriptive statistics were determined, which are used to report quantitative descriptions of data in a manageable form (Creswell, 2014). Types of descriptive statistics include frequencies and measures of central tendency. Frequencies in this study as well as the measure of central tendency were reported. That is, the number of times the variable was recorded (student subject, for example) and the means were reported (time needed to complete the edTPA portfolio, for example).
In alignment with a comparable study investigating agricultural education TCs perceptions of edTPA (Lunsford et al., 2016), analytic induction and constant comparison techniques were used to analyse the qualitative data (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). NVivo 11 Pro software was employed to manage and code the data, which enabled the researchers to assign codes to the qualitative text data set. During the first stage of analysis, the researchers scanned the Qualtrics survey data set for content related to TCs perceptions of edTPA preparation techniques. Researchers analysed the open-ended survey data several times, and while doing this assigned codes to text that was related to TCs perceptions of edTPA preparation and themes from edTPA empirical literature investigating non-PHETE TCs. Some examples of early codes created from analysing the survey data included, ‘methods course content’, ‘lack of cooperating teacher support’, and ‘strong faculty support’. The researchers analysed these codes and used them to develop focus group/one-to-one interview questions, with the purpose of obtaining additional in depth data related to these themes. The reason for adopting this approach was the limited empirical literature on edTPA within the field of physical and health education. As a result, some of the preliminary survey codes clearly warranted additional investigation through more detailed focus group/one-to-one interview discussions.

During the second phase of analysis the researchers coded the focus group/one-to-one interview data in a similar manner to the survey data until patterns emerged. Once patterns were apparent, these were categorised and developed into themes and subthemes. The third phase of data analysis was the development of a qualitative codebook that included themes, subthemes, operational definitions, and data extracts from all of the data sources.

During the data analysis process data triangulation and researcher effect techniques were employed to enhance trustworthiness and reduce researcher bias (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Data triangulation consisted of using different data collection methods. Cross-checking the codes to identify apparent themes and subthemes across the data set were also employed (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Course instructors conducting research with their existing and former students could increase researcher bias. For this reason, the researchers utilised data collection methods consistent with other comparable edTPA studies investigating the perceptions of language, music, and agricultural education TCs (see, for example, Behney, 2016; Heil & Berg, 2017; Lunsford et al., 2016). Focus group and one-to-one interview questions were also developed from the analysed survey data. Data codes, themes, and subthemes were influenced by a constant comparison of the data set, and not by the researcher's prior knowledge of the TCs. While it is never totally clear to what extent researcher familiarity has on participants, the anonymous survey data in this study closely aligned with the focus group and one-to-one interview data indicating researcher effect was likely minimal. Moreover, the focus group and one-to-one interview discussions were completed after TCs had completed the edTPA and all other course requirements for graduation, meaning that participation in the study would have zero impact on TCs course grades. Finally, participation was entirely voluntary and participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. It is suggested that where the researchers are known to the participants, positive relationships can serve to enhance research design, recruitment and participant trust (Hemphill & Richards, 2016).

**Results**

Survey results indicated that TCs spent a minimum of 15 h and maximum of 80 h to complete the edTPA portfolio ($M = 44.3$). Five out of the six TCs felt that the edTPA requirements were clear and reasonable. When asked if they felt the workday (while student teaching) was a productive time to work on the edTPA portfolio, TCs were equally divided. The TCs were also equally divided when asked if they felt the edTPA helped them to develop as a teacher. Four of the TCs felt the boot camp workshops were useful. Additional survey results can be seen in Table 1. Based on the qualitative data collected, the researchers interpreted there to be four major themes that TCs perceived as effective or ineffective when completing the edTPA portfolio during student teaching. Those themes were: (a) tandem CTs and TCs edTPA learning, (b) essential faculty support, (c) boot camp support, and (d) effective mock submissions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>edTPA requirements were clear and reasonable</td>
<td>Strongly agree/Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree/Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edTPA was a useful tool in my development as a teacher</td>
<td>Strongly agree/Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree/Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher education courses helped me to complete edTPA</td>
<td>Strongly agree/Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree/Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tandem CTs and TCs edTPA learning

In corroboration with previous studies investigating edTPA across a variety of education subjects, TCs suggested that CTs lacked the necessary edTPA knowledge and experience needed to support them effectively (Burns et al., 2015; Lunsford et al., 2016; Seymour et al., 2018). During the focus group and one-to-one interview, TCs discussed at length their frustrations that their CTs appeared to know very little about edTPA. Participants revealed that their CTs were not required to complete the edTPA when they graduated because it had only recently been adopted as a method of assessment in the State of [concealed]. The TCs were unanimous in their view that the CTs were, ‘not familiar with edTPA. This theme was initially brought to the attention of the investigators during the survey when asked, ‘describe how the edTPA helped you to develop as a teacher?’ As one TC responded:

The process [helped] me to become a better lesson plan writer. But when I actually entered the workforce edTPA was out the window because the [cooperating] teachers in my field had no clue what I was talking about or trying to introduce to them. (Toby, focus group)

The data suggested that unless a CT had graduated from a PHETE program in recent years, it was likely that they would have limited knowledge of the edTPA portfolio components. In congruence with the findings of Lunsford et al. (2016), it appears that CTs and TCs were actually learning about edTPA simultaneously. During his interview, Henry highlighted that he was the first physical education TC at the institution to participate in the edTPA pilot, and that his CTs were, ‘brand new, and had never even heard of edTPA. Nia also stated that her CTs only needed to ‘take the classes [and] pass the Praxis’ to become teachers. Participants shared concerns that their CTs didn’t fully understand the purpose of edTPA, and had little ‘interest in learning’ about it, despite the fact they were otherwise perceived as ‘understanding’ and ‘amazing’ mentors. Consequently, TCs felt that CTs could ‘not really answer questions’ that they had in relation to their edTPA portfolio:

There weren’t any edTPA questions I could get answered by my cooperating teacher. It was definitely a concern. It would be nice to have someone next to you all day that could help you, and not have to go to your [university] supervisor to get that help. (Henry, one-to-one interview)

A further concern was that CTs did not understand why TCs had to record some of their lessons and obtain written parental consent from students who participated in these videos. The CTs would also forget that TCs had scheduled to record lessons, and would question why certain students could not be recorded. As James discussed during the focus group interview:

I had 20 kids that didn't turn in a consent form at all. And they're like, “why can't they be in there?” [But] I can't legally put them in there, even though they may have one on file with the school.

During the focus group when asked how CTs had been informed about the edTPA requirements Nia stated that she had ‘handed them a piece of paper’ that had been given out during the boot camp. Lexy was in agreement, having provided her CT with the same piece of paper the year prior. The majority of TCs shared their concerns at having no idea whether CTs had actually read it or not. Several TCs attempted to explain the importance of edTPA to their CTs, and shared resources such as the handbook and various rubrics. However, as Nia stated it ‘was hard to explain the purpose of it when they didn't understand it’.

Although frustrated with the lack of CT support, the TCs appreciated that edTPA was ‘only two to three years old,’ and that it would ‘take time’ for CTs to appreciate and understand it. Although CTs had many years of teaching experience, it is suggested that they had little experience of edTPA due it being relatively new in the State of investigation. However, TCs did feel that CTs should still ‘know more about it’. The TCs felt strongly about this, and without prompting providing the researchers with two suggestions regarding ways to potentially increase CTs edTPA knowledge and understanding, which aligns with previous studies regarding adequate training for CTs (Burns et al., 2015; Lunsford et al., 2016; Seymour et al., 2018). First, they recommended that CTs be invited to participate in boot camps alongside TCs so that they can ‘get help’ and ‘learn more’. Secondly, in support of Kisaau et al. (2019), the TCs suggested edTPA be implemented into the professional development of CTs who were responsible
for supervising TCs during student teaching. As James stated during the focus group:

Do something where the cooperating teachers learn a little bit more about edTPA. I wouldn’t trade the [cooperating teachers] I had for anything. But I think it would be good for them to learn a couple things throughout the process.

Essential faculty support

In contrast to the perceived lack of edTPA support provided by CTs, the majority of TCs felt an essential amount of edTPA support was provided by the university faculty. Several TCs felt that without the support of these faculty members that they may not have passed the edTPA. During the survey one TC claimed that, ‘many students would have failed had it not been for the help and support’ of these faculty members. Another TC stated that, ‘without the [program leader and edTPA boot camp coordinator] I probably wouldn’t have made it through’. In short, data suggested that TCs perceived university faculty to be extremely supportive, which contradicts the findings of a comparable study investigating the perceptions of music education TCs (Heil & Berg, 2017). The faculty members providing TCs with this essential support were the physical and health education program leader, student teaching supervisor, and edTPA boot camp coordinator. The TCs perceived these individuals to have played a critical role in helping and supporting them during the edTPA process. They described how these faculty members went ‘above and beyond’ regarding ‘helping us understand the rubrics, keeping us on track, and holding us accountable’. During the survey James stated, ‘I got support from [the program leader, student teaching supervisor, and edTPA boot camp coordinator]. All the professors provided support and provided timelines for submission’. During the focus group Nia also revealed that, ‘I was able to email [the program leader, student teaching supervisor, and edTPA boot camp coordinator]. I know they couldn’t give me [specific] feedback. But they could do guided questions and that helped a lot’.

The majority of TCs felt that the program leader and student teaching supervisor were better equipped to assist them with subject specific concerns because of their experience and knowledge of physical and health education content. In contrast, the edTPA boot camp coordinator did not have a background in physical and health education, and was perceived to be less helpful in addressing subject related concerns. As Nia stated during the focus group discussions, ‘We would have to email the program leader or student teaching supervisor because [they were] more relevant to our field than the people running the boot camps’. During the same focus group discussion, Lexy, the health education TC, agreed with Nia and highlighted that, ‘I couldn’t really get certain questions related to the health edTPA answered [by the boot camp coordinator] because they just weren’t familiar’.

Boot camp support

Data suggested that TCs primarily perceived the boot camps to be helpful for understanding the edTPA portfolio components. However there were some concerns regarding its alignment with physical and health education content. The majority of TCs had positive things to say about their boot camp experiences, suggested it was ‘well structured’, and recommended that ‘more boot camp days’ should be offered. The majority of TCs felt that the boot camps were useful for explaining how to complete edTPA specific tasks such as compressing video files and answering questions on technical language such as ‘syntax and discourse’. They found value in reading subject specific edTPA documents including the ‘handbook, rubrics, and understanding rubric level progressions’ (URLP) form. James stated that he found ‘the handbook, URLP document, and edTPA language’ components to be relevant during the boot camps. Peer reviewing each other’s edTPA portfolios also appeared to be a beneficial boot camp experience for TCs, especially if the peer reviews were conducted within the same subject. As Lexy stated, ‘it was helpful having some days to read through the other PE majors and having him read mine as well’. Nia also valued the peer review process she went through with James, ‘it was helpful having days to read through James [portfolio], and having him read mine as well’.

In contrast, some TCs perceptions were that the boot camps were not useful in addressing physical and health education subject specific content. They believed that as physical and health education TCs they were at a ‘disadvantage’, because the boot camps were primarily focused on ‘elementary and secondary education’ subject content. As Lexy, the health education TC, stated during the focus group:

We were the first group of students where we had to pass in order to get our degree. We had the boot camps, but the physical education [and] health group were different compared to the regular secondary and elementary [groups]. I couldn’t get certain questions answered, [and] really did it on my own.

Several of the physical education TCs felt that because their field is a very different type of subject to other classroom-based subjects that the boot camp sessions failed at supporting them with subject specific concerns, especially when addressing the psychomotor domain. As Nia explained, ‘If I’m talking about something like space or awareness I would have to contact somebody in the field because they didn’t understand’.

Lexy was the only TC in her cohort who completed the health education edTPA. The boot camp example resources provided to
her were related to physical education, not health education. She perceived these examples to be unhelpful, which resulted in her purchasing health related examples online:

> I didn’t really care for the boot camps. I just feel that it wasn’t for my edTPA. I’m health, so I couldn’t really get certain questions answered. I felt clueless on certain things. I had a physical education example, but I went onto teacherspayteachers.com and there were examples on there for sale. I bought a vitamin lesson for a family consumer science example because that was the closest I was going to get to a health example. (Lexy, focus group)

**Effective mock submissions**

Participants were asked to reflect on what undergraduate courses had helped them to complete the edTPA. While they indicated that most of the courses in their degree had helped them to ‘enhance their content knowledge’ amongst other things, they stated that only the physical and health methods course content specifically contributed to their edTPA success. This aligns with Burns et al. (2015) suggestion that methods course content should closely align with edTPA requirements. As discussed earlier, in physical and health courses TCs have to complete mock edTPA assignments as part of the 50 h of observation and supervised teaching conducted in schools. Participants perceived this experience to be ‘helpful’, because they got to ‘go over the handbook’, ‘plan and teach lessons in school’, ‘record myself teaching’, and ‘understand how to cut and compress’ their video footage. As James stated, ‘some assignments that helped me complete the edTPA is when I had to record myself teaching during my observations, create lesson plans, and teach three lessons to high school students’. During the focus group discussion Lexy also highlighted the importance of methods course content aligning with edTPA components, ‘I remember in methods doing task one and two and we had to record ourselves teaching. That helped for edTPA. Understanding how to do a video’.

However, participants felt that two key components of edTPA had not been addressed during their methods courses and this would have resulted in better preparation. Firstly, the URP form was not utilised in the methods courses. They felt that the URLP form was one of the most useful documents they were provided with during the boot camp workshops. They believed it provided them with more detail’ than the handbook, and informed them on how they might score an ‘automatic one’ if they forgot to include key criteria for a specific task. As James discussed:

> In [the methods] class we should have gone over the URLP form. It tells you what you would get an automatic one on if you messed up. We both peer read each other’s stuff and Lexy said “I think you would get a four on this, but you will get an automatic one because you didn’t add your IEP students.” I looked at the URLP form and she’s right. I set [the URLP] down and was like, I’m shooting for a four and a five, is there anything that I can get an automatic one on? (James, focus group)

Secondly, the data indicated that some TCs felt that task three covering assessment had not been addressed in the physical education methods class and they were least prepared for this task. They perceived this to be due to the fact that ‘it was new’, and at that time no one really fully understood edTPA, including the adjunct course instructor. As James discussed:

> The biggest weakness would have been we didn’t go over task three. You’re supposed to have a video for your three focus students. We didn’t do that in [the physical education methods] class. It would have been good to get a video from each focus student to practice it for task three. (focus group)

This was all the more pertinent given data suggested that participants felt task three of their edTPA was the most useful component in developing them as teachers:

> Task three was useful in my development as a teacher because it made me look at how I assessed my students, and the questions I asked them. Task three also made me look at my objectives and the complexity of the questions that I asked students. (Survey response)

Participants felt that task three assisted them in writing suitable ‘objectives’, and developing ‘critical questions’. The video footage also aided them in ‘evaluating’ their teaching skills, and their student’s ‘comprehension’ and ‘progress’.

**Discussion**

Considering edTPA success directly impacts TCs graduation and certification, the lack of empirical research within physical and health education is a concern. The purpose of this study was to explore TCs perceptions of the factors that influence the effective implementation of edTPA within one teacher preparation program in the Southeastern United States. Data suggested that TCs were influenced by four themes: (a) tandem cooperating teachers and teacher candidates’ edTPA learning, (b) essential faculty support, (c) boot camp workshop support, and (d) effective mock submissions. Results of this exploratory case study both support
and contradict the findings of prior studies investigating edTPA perceptions in other subject areas.

The observation that CTs lack of sufficient knowledge and experience of edTPA and subsequent inability to fully support TCs aligns with previous studies investigating the perceptions of TCs across various subject areas including elementary, agricultural, mathematics, and special education (Burns et al., 2015; Lunsford et al., 2016; Seymour et al., 2018). It could be argued CTs edTPA knowledge is likely to improve over time given the edTPA is only three years old in the State of investigation. Regardless, TCs felt more training was needed for CTs, and believed this would provide them with more edTPA support during student teaching. This supports the findings of comparable studies where lack of CT support and limited training for CTs were perceived to be areas of concern by TCs and CTs (Burns et al., 2015; Lunsford et al., 2016; Seymour et al., 2018). The data generated through this study reasserts that training should include edTPA terminology, acceptable and unacceptable levels of support, and understanding rubric scoring. In recent years two separate edTPA professional development workshops for physical and health educators were offered by one of the investigators. These took place in the county where TCs completed student teaching as part of mandatory in-service training. Unfortunately, only seven CTs attended these workshops, which was considerably below expectation. A potential solution to increasing engagement with edTPA professional development workshops may be to make them mandatory for CTs who have a TC assigned to them. However, limitations to this recommendation may be that CTs have to be offered release time from their school to attend such training. Further compounding their apparent lack of motivation to engage in related professional development, is the fact that CTs, at least in this school district, are not compensated for their supervision of TCs. Evening and virtual boot camps, as well as small stipends may be ways to overcome these barriers. It is important to highlight that CTs should not be blamed for the lack of training provided, or the constraints that impact their ability to attend training for this uncompensated role. In fact, the data suggested that TCs received inadequate levels of information and training required to successfully support TCs in what is often a complex and confusing teacher performance assessment model.

The TCs felt that physical and health education faculty members, student teacher supervisor and boot camp coordinator provided essential edTPA support. This contradicted the findings of a comparable music education study conducted by Heil and Berg (2017), where TCs felt detached from faculty members. The TCs also felt that physical and health education faculty could better assist them with subject specific questions and concerns because they were experts in that field. In contrast, the boot camp coordinator was perceived to be less helpful at addressing TCs subject specific queries. As a result, TCs perceived boot camps to be somewhat ineffective in providing subject specific edTPA support. They argued that physical and health education faculty should be more involved in the boot camps. Boot camps were perceived to be well structured and effective in supporting TCs with edTPA specific tasks including compressing video files, accessing handbook and rubrics, and peer reviewing subject specific portfolios.

Methods courses contributed to TCs edTPA success more than non-methods courses. Specifically, TCs believed the mock assignments completed in the methods courses effectively prepared them for edTPA success, which supports the findings of a similar study (Burns et al., 2015). However, TCs had not been given the opportunity to complete a mock version of Task 3 during the physical education methods course, which they stated was the component that contributed the most to their development as a teacher. This potentially occurred because adjunct instructors, who were also CTs, taught the physical education methods courses in the pilot and early stages while the department was in transition to replace a retired faculty member. Data suggested that mock assignments were an extremely effective preparation technique, and that all components of edTPA should be included as mock assignments during the methods courses.

Due to limited empirical data on edTPA within the field of physical and health education, and the fact that this study was an exploratory case study conducted with one preparation program, additional research is clearly required. The investigators suggest the following areas are investigated. First, CTs perceptions and knowledge of edTPA must be investigated because CT support was perceived to be lacking in this and other subject area studies (Burns et al., 2015; Lunsford et al., 2016; Seymour et al., 2018). Second, access to the nature of edTPA training and quality of such training for CTs must also be evaluated to enhance the quality of support TCs receive from their supervisors within the school setting. Third, edTPA preparation workshops such as boot camps occurring outside of methods courses should be investigated to evaluate their overall effectiveness of TC preparation. Finally, the alignment of methods course content with edTPA components must be analysed. Despite the relatively small sample size (due to the trend of declining PHETE enrolments in the United States), this exploratory case study offers a valuable introduction to some of the issues associated with effective edTPA preparation. Furthermore, it is hoped that those using edTPA in similar institutions are able to make ‘moderatum generalizations’ (Williams, 2002). In short, they can recognise and identify with the factors influencing effective use of the edTPA and consider the potential use of the solutions offered and/or conducting their own research in this area.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).
Notes on contributors

Shelley L. Holden, Ed. D is an Associate Professor of Health Education at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama (USA) where she has been for the last 12 years. She started her research career examining coach and athlete burnout and later expanded her research to include nutritional knowledge of coaches, students, and athletes.

Dr. Craig Parkes is an Assistant Professor and Physical Education Program Coordinator in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama, USA. His research focuses on the occupational socialization experiences of preservice and inservice physical education teachers and higher education faculty, the recruitment and retention of undergraduate physical education students, and the teaching games for understanding model.

Dr Nick O'Leary is Course Leader and Senior Lecturer in Physical Education in the Institute of Human Sciences, Faculty of Education, Health and Well-Being, University of Wolverhampton, UK. His research focuses on how current and past experiences influence how teachers interpret and teach various aspects of Physical Education and the use of innovative instructional models in Physical Education and Sports Coaching.

ORCID

Craig Parkes http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5013-5219

References


State of [concealed] Department of Education. (2016) [Q4][Q5].


