

Research on Performance Assessment of Australian Pre-service Teachers

Qi Huang^{1*}, Juntao Zhou¹, Yuke Wu¹

¹ English Faculty, Chongqing University of Education, Chongqing, China

Email Address

Evanhuang2603390946@outlook.com (Qi Huang)

*Correspondence: Evanhuang2603390946@outlook.com

Received: 29 March 2024; Accepted: 30 April 2024; Published: 19 May 2024

Abstract:

Performance assessment has garnered significant attention in educational research, with scholars exploring its conceptual underpinnings and diverse applications. Existing literature delves into various forms of performance assessment, such as portfolio assessment, project assessment, and classroom observation, highlighting their effectiveness in evaluating student learning progress and skill development. However, a notable gap exists in the analysis of specific performance assessment standards and the synthesis of evaluation criteria across different methods. This research aims to address this gap by focusing on the performance assessment of Australian pre-service teachers in China. The study examines the national framework for teacher training and qualification in Australia, which emphasizes the importance of practical skills for effective teaching. Existing Chinese scholarship on this topic recognizes the multidimensional evaluation capabilities of performance assessment for pre-service teachers, but lacks systematic analysis of evaluation standards and in-depth case studies exploring practical applications. To contribute to the existing knowledge base, this research will conduct a comprehensive analysis of performance assessment standards and criteria specific to Australian pre-service teachers in China. By examining relevant case studies, the study seeks to provide deeper insights into the practical implementation and implications of this assessment approach, offering valuable information for both researchers and practitioners in the field of teacher education.

Keywords:

Education, Performance Assessment, Pre-service Teacher

1. Introduction

Performance assessment is a type of test that requires students to demonstrate their knowledge or skills by creating answers or products [1]. Due to its high contextual nature and close association with teaching, performance assessment can objectively assess students' actual learning situations, reflecting their level of integration of practice and theory. Additionally, performance assessment is also considered a key tool in promoting the quality of teaching practice for teacher candidates [2]. Implementing performance assessment for teacher candidates helps lay the foundation

for the professionalization of teaching [3]. In China, the education authorities have issued relevant documents for the comprehensive assessment of teacher candidates' qualities. "Opinions on the Implementation of the Excellent Teacher Training Program 2.0" (Teacher [2018] No. 13) proposed building cooperation mechanisms in teacher candidate education practice, professional practice, and part-time teaching by teacher education faculty. Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, and other teacher training institutions have pioneered the assessment of the quality of teacher candidate professional practice, emphasizing the role of formative assessment in educational practice evaluation. However, existing assessments often focus only on the teaching skills of intern teachers in teaching English grammar knowledge points, while paying little attention to their setting of teaching contexts and guidance on student language learning [4]. Furthermore, some schools or institutions have serious problems in the feedback mechanism of performance assessment, namely, lack of feedback or feedback not being used and implemented. In the application of performance assessment in the English subject, teachers and students are mostly unclear about the process of performance assessment, unaware of how performance assessment tasks are designed, and how grading criteria are developed. Overall, the domestic performance assessment system for teacher candidates is still imperfect, with issues such as single evaluation, lack of effective implementation, and inadequate cognitive evaluation, making it difficult to guarantee the professional development of teacher candidates.

Besides, Australia's performance assessment system for teacher candidates has shown significant development and positive outcomes. Since 2003, national standards for teachers and teacher education have been established, leading to improved classroom teaching and increased public confidence. The system is praised for its comprehensiveness, practicality, and ability to promote reflection, integrating research from education, psychology, and teaching practice [5]. Its implementation allows teachers to enhance their teaching quality through targeted improvement [6].

This study will focus on analyzing the performance assessment system for teacher candidates in Australia, conducting in-depth exploration of the standards for each performance assessment and carrying out specific case studies, aiming to provide references for improving the teacher evaluation system in China, and providing guidance for the teaching practice ability development of teacher candidates and pre-service teachers in China.

2. Materials and Methods

This study investigates the performance assessment of pre-service teachers in Australia, focusing on its evaluation standards, implementation process, and underlying principles. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research analyzes official data and relevant literature from sources such as CNKI and the Australian Education Network. A case study of the University of Sydney provides an in-depth analysis of its application of the Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA) standards, procedures, and task design. The study aims to identify key patterns and extract valuable insights to inform the development of performance assessment systems for pre-service teachers in China.

3. Research finding

The development of performance assessment for Australian teacher candidates has benefited from various government policies. Previously, the impact of the Programm for International Student Assessment (PISA) highlighted declines in Australia's scores in mathematics, science, and reading, revealing widespread issues in the education of young people. Subsequently, the Australian government focused on finding a stable and reasonable performance assessment system. The “Australian Professional Standards for Teachers” (APST) framework, initially introduced in 2011 and revised multiple times, serves to assess and develop standards and guidelines for educational professionals. Additionally, the Australian Quality Framework, introduced in 2012, ensures the high-quality development of education and care services.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) leads and supervises the implementation of the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) in Australia. To encourage active participation in the construction of the performance assessment system, AITSL provides research funding and policy support to university alliances, developing two TPA schemes: the Graduate Teacher Assessment (AfGT) and the Graduate Teacher Performance Assessment (GTPA).

3.1. TPA

TPA evaluates the practical skills and knowledge of pre-service teachers [8]. In the final year of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses, pre-service teachers undergo TPA, which is also a requirement for their successful graduation. The assessment, conducted by ITE staff, aims to collect evidence of pre-service teachers' skills, knowledge, and practices demonstrated in teaching activities, including planning, teaching, assessment, and reflection. Furthermore, all evidence must align with the requirements of the “Australian Graduate Teacher Standards.” As part of ITE certification requirements, all performance assessment results must be evaluated by AITSL's expert advisory groups.

Key standards specified by AITSL for TPA [10] include:

- Planning and Preparation: Pre-service teachers need to demonstrate their ability to develop effective teaching plans, including teaching objectives, resources, and assessment methods.
- Instructional Practice: Pre-service teachers should effectively impart knowledge and skills, interact with students, and adjust based on student needs.
- Assessment and Reflection: Pre-service teachers need to demonstrate their ability to assess student learning progress and reflect on and improve teaching based on assessment results.
- Professionalism: Pre-service teachers should adhere to professional ethics, establish positive relationships with colleagues, students, and parents, and continuously develop their professional knowledge and skills.

3.2. GTPA

GTPA is a tool developed by the Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education (ILSTE) in 2015 for the final assessment of graduate teachers' real classroom practice abilities [7]. It is based on the American TPA [9] and operates

according to the Graduate Teacher Standards (Australian Professional Standards for Graduate Teachers, 2011).

GTPA standards emphasize alignment with Australian Teacher Standards 1.2, focusing on the assessment of pre-service teachers in the areas of lesson planning, teaching practice, and assessment feedback [11]. The Institute for Learning Sciences & Teacher Education at Australian Catholic University (ACU) [15] has standardized and elaborated on the GTPA criteria.

3.3. *AfGT*

AfGT, besides TPA and GTPA, is another assessment tool for graduate teacher teaching assessment, developed by the AfGT Alliance and implemented at various universities (such as the University of Melbourne, lead institution, University of Canberra, University of Western Australia), designed and implemented through collaboration among roles. AfGT was developed by the Australian Higher Education Providers Alliance (TEMAG) in 2016 with assistance from the Australian government and AITSL, and it follows the TPA program standard 1.2 guidelines. It has been implemented and refined continuously, starting in 2017 in educational alliances' Initial Teacher Education (ITE) institutions [13].

In conclusion, the Australian performance assessment standards for teacher candidates are closely integrated with the "Australian Graduate Teacher Standards," ensuring that assessment results effectively reflect whether pre-service teachers meet graduation requirements and provide assurance for teacher quality. These standards focus on collecting evidence of pre-service teachers' performance in real teaching contexts, avoiding the limitations of solely relying on theoretical exam assessments of teaching abilities. Additionally, they emphasize reflection, requiring pre-service teachers to analyze their teaching behaviors and propose improvement plans, which helps cultivate teachers' self-reflective abilities and professional development awareness. The involvement of AITSL's expert advisory groups ensures the objectivity and professionalism of assessment results [13]. However, performance assessment also has limitations, such as high assessment costs, potential subjectivity in assessment results, and the need for further exploration of its applicability to different subjects and teaching contexts. Therefore, in implementing performance assessment, it is necessary to consider optimizing the assessment process, reducing assessment costs, minimizing subjectivity in assessment results, improving the objectivity and fairness of assessment, making performance assessment standards more flexible, applicable to different subjects and teaching contexts, and taking measures to help pre-service teachers cope with the pressure of performance assessment, promoting their professional development.

The AfGT's assessment elements, developed under specialized headings and grading scales, convey expectations for performance in all tasks among teacher educators and graduate teachers, ensuring transparency and alignment with the Australian Teacher Standards at the graduate level [16]. Though assessing teaching can often be complex and subjective, this grading standard enables teacher educators and graduate teachers to assess more accurately, further delineating the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers - Graduate level. AfGT's four key elements include:

Element 1: Planning Learning and Teaching

Element 2: Analysing Teaching Practice

Element 3: Assessing Impact on Student Learning

Element 4: Extending Practice

These elements are interrelated and interact with each other. Figure 1 below clearly reflects the relationships between the four elements.

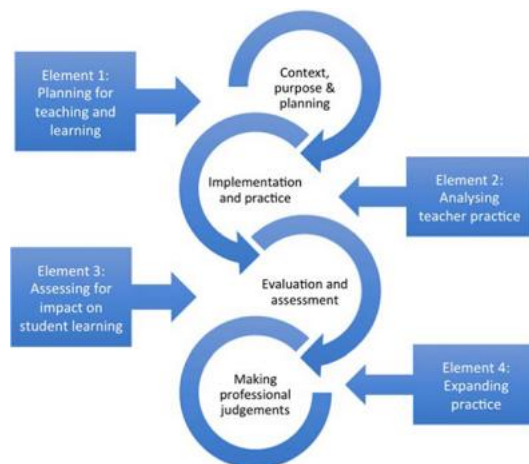


Figure 1. AfGT's four key elements.

AfGT's specific assessment content is fully presented in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Professional-Practice-Capstone-Project-Primary-Final-Placement-Expectations.

Evaluation Content	Professional Knowledge and Practice	1. Demonstrate through their teaching an understanding of how physical, cultural, social, linguistic and intellectual characteristics influence learning 2. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the subject content 3. Seek to engage all their students, maintain high expectations, and implement well-structured lesson 4. Develop and deliver lesson plans appropriate to the curriculum area and students which appropriately align curriculum, assessment & reporting requirements and begin implementing these lesson plans with their classes 5. Create well organised lessons within a safe, structured learning environment, and demonstrate a capacity to manage challenging student behaviours 6. Demonstrate a capacity to analyse a variety of student assessment data, summative & formative, to provide timely and meaningful feedback (implemented where appropriate according to their placement) 7. Use student assessment data to inform future planning to enhance the learning of all students 8. Use a range of appropriate strategies to engage all their students as appropriate to their discipline 9. Demonstrate a capacity to differentiate their teaching to meet the individual needs of a range of learners in their classes, including ATSI students, EAL/D students and students with disabilities 10. Develop, implement and evaluate units of work appropriate to the scope of the placement 11. Take leadership and demonstrate initiative in the design and delivery of teaching 12. Teach a sequence of at least 4 lessons in at least three different KLAs. We would expect this to commence within a few days of the placement starting or at the very least, the second week of placement 13. By the final 10 days of the placement, teach the equivalent of 0.8 load
--------------------	-------------------------------------	---

		of full-time teacher as context will allow to simulate professional role and responsibility 14. Normally have a maximum of 2 non-teaching days
	Professional Engagement and Learning	1. Attend meetings, duties, school activities and any opportunities for engagement with the broader school community 2. Conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner whilst in schools including seeking and using feedback on their performance 3. Interact with teachers, students and the school community in an appropriate manner and comply with all relevant ethical and legal requirements 4. Show an awareness of the importance of continued professional learning, and participate where appropriate in collegial networks 5. Collect evidence of curriculum ideas, strategies, timetables, school policy documents, teaching resources, lesson plans, units of work and other relevant documentation to help you demonstrate your knowledge of the Australian Graduate Teaching Standards1.

AfGT's assessment system has the advantages of flexibility, adaptability, convenient collaboration, and transparency. Additionally, the evaluation system has four characteristics: comprehensiveness, practicality, diversity, and development. Specifically, the assessment content covers professional knowledge and practice, professional participation and learning, comprehensively examining teachers' professional abilities and qualities, including teaching design, implementation, evaluation, and other aspects. It has strong practicality and also considers the learning needs of different types of students, such as ATSI students, non-English native speakers, and disabled students, with targeted assessment requirements. Moreover, the results are not only used to evaluate the current level of teachers but can also guide teachers' future development, helping teachers continuously improve their teaching abilities. Scholars have analyzed that the AfGT assessment content and task requirements are deeply integrated with the requirements of teachers' teaching, which can promote the integrated development of pre-service and in-service teachers.

In conclusion, the development potential of this assessment system is prominent. However, there is still room for improvement in the future, such as optimizing implementation costs and feedback cycles. Additionally, assessment design can further consider strengthening the training of teacher educators to help them better understand and master assessment standards and methods [17]. Furthermore, developing more diverse assessment resources to meet the assessment needs of different schools and disciplines, as well as establishing an AfGT assessment result feedback system so that teacher educators and graduate teachers can receive assessment feedback in a timely manner and improve teaching and learning based on feedback. Building on mature teacher assessment systems, international cooperation can also be strengthened to exchange learning experiences and jointly improve the quality of assessment. The content and task requirements of the assessment are deeply integrated with the requirements of teachers' teaching.

3.4. Analysis of Specific Performance Assessment Plan for Australian Pre-Service Teachers - Taking the University of Sydney's Professional Practice Program as an Example

The University of Sydney implements performance assessment for its pre-service teachers starting from the second year of undergraduate studies and continues until the fourth year. The TPA assessment system (EDUP) implemented by the University of Sydney is led and guided by the school, with standards aligned with the APST standards set by AITSL [14]. The participants in this system include mentors, assessors, coordinators, and professional experienced personnel. This study selects the implementation plan of the University of Sydney's fourth-year undergraduate professional practice for analysis.

The overall content of the EDUP4079 program mainly includes professional experience forums, cultivation of teaching philosophies, literature reviews—integrating teaching/assessment theory with practice, and reports—evaluating professional decisions in teaching [19].

Tasks that students need to complete include:

- a. Participating in a professional experience forum (online) to express their teaching views (150 words).
- b. Writing a report on professional decisions made during the assessment of learning (1350 words).
- c. Reviewing assessment literature related to classroom practice and writing a paper report (1350 words).
- d. The main form of the program is seminars combined with individual presentations (the cultivation of teaching philosophy section requires the seminar leader to participate, engaging in face-to-face conversations with students to understand their educational philosophies). After students complete all tasks, assessors will evaluate students based on attendance rates, the quality of student writing, individual presentation outcomes, and interview results.

The specific assessment criteria are as follows:

(GQ1-9 are the evaluation criteria for pre-service teachers set by the University of Sydney; LO1-5 are the evaluation criteria set by AITSL to meet the assessment standards for pre-service teachers in Australia)

GQ1 Depth of Subject Matter Expertise

GQ2 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

GQ3 Oral and Written Communication

GQ4 Information and Digital Literacy

GQ5 Creativity

GQ6 Cultural Competence

GQ7 Interdisciplinary Effectiveness

GQ8 Integration of Professional, Ethical, and Personal Identity

GQ9 Impact

The evaluation is based on seminars, lectures, and micro-teaching, with student written feedback and performance as the main reference evidence. Unlike existing assessment mechanisms in China, this assessment is not solely conducted by the school; its assessment standards originate from AITSL's national standards [18] and

other evaluation systems (GTPA, AfGT), with these two evaluation systems being two types of TPA tools developed by different institutions. GTPA is led by the Australian Catholic University (ACU), while AfGT is led by the University of Melbourne (UoM). They are both aimed at assessing teachers' performance, professional decisions, and their impact on student learning in real-development of the assessed individuals in the education profession, greatly enhancing the authenticity, objectivity, and diversity of the evaluation.

4. The General Patterns of Performance Assessment of Australia Pre-Service Teacher

While the programs proposed by different Australian universities vary in terms of names, processes, and evaluation criteria, there are several common patterns and characteristics:

Unified Professional Standards. The existing two commonly used assessment systems in Australia, AfGT and GTPA, are both implemented by AITSL, responsible for the specific work of teacher assessment in Australia. Both pre-service and final assessments are developed based on the relevant standards of TPA tools. At the governmental level, Australia officially promulgated the "Australian Professional Standards for Teachers" in February 2011, which sets standards and requirements for teachers at various stages, promoting professional learning, practice, and participation [21], thus enhancing the quality of teachers and contributing positively to their public recognition [20]. The optimization of the aforementioned three tools is based on these standards.

Scientific Cultivation and Assessment Standards. In 2011, the Australian federal government issued the "Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia-Standards and Procedures" (hereinafter referred to as "Standards and Procedures"). In December 2015, a revised version of the "Standards and Procedures" was officially announced under the leadership of AITSL. The new "Standards and Procedures" provide more detailed and stringent regulations on the principles, elements, systems, standards, and procedures for the certification of national teacher courses (Stakeholders, GTPA). In 2018, the "Standards and Procedures" were updated again to ensure that all pre-service education graduates meet the standards before graduation, with AITSL conducting regular inspections and evaluations of cultivation and assessment standards, providing unified assessments. Both AfGT and GTPA are designed based on these assessment standards.

Emphasis on Program Implementation and Effectiveness. Australia has implemented various measures to effectively cultivate pre-service teachers' teaching and practical capabilities, providing comprehensive support for pre-service teacher training. For example, at the government level, Australia has established specialized institutions to monitor the implementation of programs. In August 2005, the Australian government, along with state governments, established the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), whose main responsibility is to promote the training of excellent teachers and supervise pre-service teacher education. At the tool level, the Teacher Self-Assessment Tool (TSAT) was developed to simplify the teacher evaluation process, improve the operational efficiency of the aforementioned three performance assessment tools. At the operational level, the government has implemented various financial plans to ensure long-term investment in training programs [22]. For instance, in 2007, the "Improving

the Practical Component of Teacher Education” program was launched, and in 2008, a commitment was made to provide an additional \$18.02 million in funding to enhance pre-service teacher professional practice.

Implications. To enhance teacher education effectiveness, China should establish unified national teacher professional standards and evaluation systems, drawing inspiration from the Australian model. This includes clear stages and requirements for teacher professional development, encompassing both pre-service and in-service teachers. Additionally, diversifying evaluation subjects and channels is crucial, incorporating perspectives from school principals, teachers, parents, peers, and experts through various methods such as written reports, video recordings, and teaching reflections. Finally, greater emphasis should be placed on cultivating and assessing teachers’ classroom teaching performance abilities through simulations, micro-teaching, and internships, ensuring effective teaching and student learning.

5. Conclusions

The nascent pre-service teacher certification system in China, particularly in the area of performance assessment, stands in stark contrast to the well-established practices in Australia. This research underscores the potential for China to draw upon the Australian model to enhance its own system, bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation. Key recommendations include the establishment of a unified national framework akin to Australia’s “Professional Standards for Teachers,” adaptable to evolving national conditions and focused on assessing pre-service teachers’ practical teaching abilities.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of delving into practical aspects such as professional practice modes, participant responsibilities, and mentor selection. Standardized practice processes, facilitated by internship manuals and detailed research reports, can guide and regulate professional practice experiences. Ultimately, pre-service teacher education should strive to bridge the gap between theory and practice by integrating moral values, knowledge, and skills, systematically developing professional competencies through a holistic approach encompassing curriculum design, teaching practice, and evaluation methods. By embracing these recommendations and adapting them to the Chinese context, the nation can cultivate a new generation of highly skilled and effective educators, contributing to long-term societal development through quality education.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Hambleton, R.K. *Advances in Assessment Models, and Practices.* // Berliner, D. C., Calfee, R. C.(ed.). *Handbook of Educational Psychology*[C]. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996, 902.

- [2] Zheng, Q.Q. Performance Evaluation: An Important Tool to Improve the Quality of Student Teachers' Practical Teaching. *Journal of Hubei Adult Education College*, 2019, 25(01), 40-43.
- [3] Zhang, X.L.; Tong, L.H. Action Reflection on Performance Evaluation of Classroom Teaching: Analysis of the Characteristics of Australian Student Teacher Competency Assessment. *Educational Development Research*, 2021, 9.
- [4] Li, Z.Y.; Wang, P. Performance Evaluation of American Intern Teachers and Its Enlightenment to the Evaluation of Educational Practice in China. *Journal of Educational Science of Hunan Normal University*, 2018.
- [5] Cochran, S.M.; Zeichner, K. Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2020.
- [6] Guskey, T.R. Closing the feedback loop: How to connect assessment with effective teaching and learning. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2020.
- [7] Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education. Available online: <https://www.acu.edu.au/> (accessed on 5 April 2024).
- [8] Teaching performance assessment. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/> (accessed on 1 April 2024).
- [9] American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). (2010). (accessed on 1 April 2024).
- [10] TPA process long description. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/teaching-performance-assessment/tpa-process---long-description> (accessed on 20 March 2024).
- [11] program-standard-1-2-factsheet---2021. Available online: https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/initial-teacher-education-resources/tpa/program-standard-1-2-factsheet---2021.pdf?sfvrsn=d0f9a53c_2Graduate (accessed on 10 April 2024).
- [12] Graduate career stage. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards/graduate> (accessed on 20 February 2024).
- [13] Understand ITE program accreditation. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/understand-ite-program-accreditation> (accessed on 1 April 2024).
- [14] Focus areas in action. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards/focus-areas-in-action> (accessed on 12 March 2024).
- [15] Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/informing-teaching-navigating-and-translating-education-best-practice> (accessed on 12 March 2024).
- [16] Assessment for Graduate Teaching Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Available online: <https://education.unimelb.edu.au/research/projects/assessment-for-graduate-teaching-afgt> (accessed on 23 April 2024).
- [17] I represent a provider seeking advice on a teaching performance assessment. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/teaching-performance-assessment/I-represent-a-provider-seeking-advice-on-a-teaching-performance-assessment> (accessed on 15 February 2024).

- [18] Teacher Standards. Available online: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards> (accessed on 4 May 2024).
- [19] EDUP4079: Professional Experiences 4. Available online: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/units/EDUP4079> (accessed on 4 May 2024).
- [20] Teaching Performance Assessment - Curtin OUA - School of Education Stakeholders – GTPA. Available online: https://graduatetpa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/GTPA-Report-Card-2017-2022_Building-the-Evidence-Base.pdf (accessed on 9 April 2024).
- [21] [australian-professional-standards-for-teachers.pdf](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers.pdf?sfvrsn=5800f33c_64). Available online: https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers.pdf?sfvrsn=5800f33c_64 (accessed on 1 May 2024).
- [22] Evaluating and Improving Teacher Preparation. Available online: <https://naeducation.org/evaluating-and-improving-teacher-preparation-programs-commissioned-paper-series/> (accessed on 4 May 2024).



© 2024 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)