

Voices of Pre-Service Teachers:
Perspectives on the Performance Assessment
for California Teachers (PACT)

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Many educators and policy makers find the declining enrollment in California teacher preparation programs alarming (Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CTC], 2008a), especially given a nationwide statistic showing that one-third of all new teachers leave their initial placements after only three years of teaching, and 46% do so within the first five years (Kopkowski, 2008). Eight percent of the total teaching force in public schools and 9% of teachers under age 30 left the teaching profession altogether in 2004-05 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Considering the high turnover rates during the first years in the profession and considerable attrition rates among teachers, a constant supply of new teachers is not only essential, but also critical.

California's teacher preparation program enrollments have declined steadily in both Multiple and Single Subject programs since 2001. A CTC report shows a decline of 48% among Multiple Subject and 18% among

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Single Subject enrollees in teacher preparation programs in the state between 2001 and 2007 (CTC, 2008a). Currently, the required performance assessments and long induction periods required by California Senate Bill 2042 (1998) make the acquisition of teacher certification in California more challenging than ever before.

There are three performance assessment instruments in California approved by CTC at this time. The California Teacher Performance Assessment (CalTPA) and the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) have been approved for use across teacher education programs in the state. A third, the Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers (FAST),¹ is specific to one California State University (CSU) campus. Since its development, PACT has been growing in popularity among California's teacher education institutions. Although many institutions have been piloting PACT for several years now, the assessment is still in the early stages of implementation at a number of other participating sites.

As California moves into a new era of teacher performance assessments, it is important to examine the effects of these assessments on pre-service teachers in order to further understand and shape programs that prepare candidates for such evaluations. In this exploratory study, we examine how the PACT impacted pre-service teachers' academic and personal lives. This study was conducted in the 2006-07 academic year at a University of California campus where the PACT assessment had been piloted for several years. Since performance assessments for pre-service teachers are still fairly new, this study could help inform considerations of ways to structure teacher education programs to prepare pre-service teachers for PACT. Moreover, this study adds an additional layer to previous instruments, such as part of the PACT Candidate Survey (Pecheone & Chung, 2006, 2007), through further exploration of the effects of PACT on pre-service teachers.

In this article, we first review academic literature on the development and implementation of teacher performance assessments (TPAs) in California. The second part of the article describes the study itself and its findings. The article concludes with a discussion of cross-cutting themes that emerged from the data and suggestions for teacher education programs.

Background

Teacher Education Reform

California's implementation of PACT is part of a larger movement in teacher education reform in the United States. In the current era of accountability and standards-based reforms, teacher preparation

programs and state and federal standards are being reshaped (Tellez, 2003). As part of these reforms, federal and state policies have mandated requirements for the assessment of pre-service teachers across teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Mounting concerns regarding the preparation of effective teachers in the nation's teacher education programs have resulted in the establishment of TPAs (Ahlquist, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Sleeter, 2003). The federal *Higher Education Act* calls for university evaluations to be partially based on graduates' performance and test scores (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Additionally, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requires programs to align pre-service teacher instruction and assessment with teacher accreditation standards (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

These reforms have caused major structural and organizational rearrangements in how California prepares teachers. In 1998, Senate Bill (SB) 2042 was passed with the intention of establishing a new system for teacher preparation (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). As a part of the bill, the CTC was required to implement a new teacher education curriculum and program standards that were aligned with the state-adopted K-12 content standards. These standards, along with professional standards and pre-service teacher assessments, are now the basis for California's teacher preparation programs (Selvester, Summers, & Williams, 2006). In response to SB 2042, teacher education programs across the state have reframed their curricula to reflect the new requirements established by the CTC.

High-Stakes Assessment and Current Implications

Today, California teacher credential candidates are held to a higher standard in acquiring licenses to teach. In accordance with Senate Bill 1209 (2006, Chap. 517), each teacher preparation program was required to embed TPAs by July 1, 2008, as part of their graduates' completion of the credentialing process. The newly enacted mandate is a result of Senate Bill 2042 of 1998; however, the implementation requirements of the bill were delayed for fiscal reasons until the passage of SB 1209 in 2006 (CTC, 2007a).

Since the passage of SB 2042, debate has taken place over the type of assessment to be used in qualifying teacher credential candidates for teaching licenses. The CTC hired the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop the CalTPA to evaluate skills candidates are expected to have learned before graduating from a credential program (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). However, teacher education programs were allowed the option of developing their own assessments based on the thirteen

measures outlined in the state Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs) (Selvester et al., 2006).

As an alternative to CalTPA, Stanford University led a consortium of teacher preparation programs across California to collaboratively develop the PACT. The initial PACT consortium was composed of eight University of California campuses, San Jose State University, San Diego State University, Stanford University, and Mills College. The PACT examines pre-service teachers' planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection skills using professional standards of practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006). These skills are documented through a portfolio of lesson plans, analysis of student work, and videotaped clips of pre-service teaching, all of which are accompanied by reflective writing (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Trained readers score PACT portfolios using a task-based rubric (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). In October 2007, the CTC approved PACT as a measure to qualify teacher credential candidates for teaching licenses (CTC, 2007b).

Since its development in 2002, PACT has steadily gained in popularity. The PACT consortium has expanded from 12 institutions in 2002

Table 1
Members of the PACT Consortium as of January, 2009

<i>University of California (UC)</i>	<i>California State University (CSU)</i>
UC Berkeley	Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
UC Davis	CSU Chico
UC Irvine	CSU Channel Islands
UCLA	CSU Dominguez Hills
UC Riverside	CSU Monterey Bay
UC San Diego	CSU Northridge
UC Santa Barbara	CSU Sacramento
UC Santa Cruz	Humboldt State University
	San Diego State University
<i>Private/Independent</i>	San Francisco State University
Antioch University Santa Barbara	San Jose State University
Holy Names University	Sonoma State University
Mills College	
Notre Dame de Namur University	<i>District Intern Programs</i>
Pepperdine University	San Diego City Schools IP
Stanford University	High Tech High
St. Mary's College of California	
University of the Pacific	
University of San Diego	
University of Southern California	

From Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT). (n.d.). PACT Members. Retrieved January 15, 2009 from http://www.pacttpa.org/_main/hub.php?pageName=PACT_Members

to 30 state and private universities and two district intern programs in 2009. In 2004-05, 29.2% of all newly credentialed teachers went through the teacher preparation program at one of the universities belonging to the PACT consortium (Pecheone & Chung, 2007). University of California campuses comprise 25% of the PACT membership (Performance Assessment for California Teachers n.d.).

Because PACT is relatively new, many California universities are still considering whether to use this assessment or its alternative in fulfilling the CTC requirements mandated by SB 2042. Although the initial consortium members have been piloting PACT since its development, members who joined the consortium at a later date are still in early pilot stages. In 2003-04, thirteen PACT programs participated in the second year pilot of the assessment. A review of scores showed patterns in student performance, with instructional planning as a high-scoring area. A portion of PACT submissions was double-scored, and results showed a high degree of inter-rater reliability. In its first pilot year, 2002-03, inter-scorer consensus exhibited very little variation, and in the 2003-04 study, 91% of double scored documents were in exact agreement or in agreement within one point (Pecheone & Chung, 2007).

As part of the pilot review, an on-line survey was administered to ask participants about their experiences with PACT and to acquire demographic information. The results from the PACT Participant Survey in the second year pilot study found that the majority (60%) of pre-service teachers learned “important skills” in their preparation of the PACT assessment portfolio (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Pre-service teachers reported that the PACT assessment preparation process “improved their ability to reflect on their teaching” and “their assessment of student learning” (Pecheone & Chung, 2006, p. 11). The study also found that the support provided by teacher education programs is critical to the successful completion of PACT. Pecheone and Chung (2006) point out that pre-service teachers who “receive targeted support in their development of the [teaching event] (TE) view their experiences more positively and report that the process of constructing their TEs strengthened their teaching” (p. 11).

The 2003-04 survey results indicated that candidates teaching in urban settings reported the presence of limitations on their “teaching decisions related to district mandated curricula” (Pecheone & Chung, 2007, p. 29). Further analysis of scores showed that these reported limitations were associated with lower scores (Pecheone & Chung, 2007). No significant variation between candidate groups was found in grade levels taught or in reported numbers of students who are English learners present in the student teaching placement classrooms; however, candidates teaching in suburban schools received higher scores on

PACT than those in urban placements. Moreover, there were marginal differences between scores received on PACT for females and males, with females scoring higher (Pechione & Chung, 2007).

Selvester, Summers, and Williams (2006) conducted another study at a CSU campus to assess the effects of a locally developed teaching performance assessment. The researchers sought to determine the impact of a TPA on faculty as well as its ability to rate pre-service teachers' skills. They found that teacher performance assessments do benefit teacher education programs. Most significantly, the pre-service teachers' questionnaire comments revealed a desire for greater support in the form of models, mentoring, and direction during the TPA implementation. After identifying those needs, the faculty improved the articulation of their program courses to better support the needs of their pre-service teachers, resulting in an overall improved teacher education program (Selvester et al., 2006).

Who Prepares California Teachers?

California's teachers earn their professional credentials through a variety of different routes, but most participate in programs run by state and private universities. According to a CTC report (2008), CSU campuses prepare the majority, roughly 53%, of California teachers. Teachers who have been prepared in other states and later acquired California's teaching credential comprise 15% of the state's teaching force. Private and independent universities prepare about 42% of California teachers, while UC campuses prepare only about 5% (CTC, 2008).

As reflected in Table 1, 27% of the PACT consortium is comprised of UC programs. CSU represent 37.5% of the consortium and private/independent institutions represent 31%. However, as mentioned in the previous section, most of the programs (67% of the consortium) taking part in the initial years of implementing the PACT pilot assessment were UC programs, which prepare the smallest percentage of the total credential candidates.

Significance of the Study

The goal of this study was to acquire a deeper understanding of how the PACT preparation process affects teaching credential candidates and to inform teacher education programs currently implementing or considering the adoption of PACT. The open-ended, unstructured survey was specifically designed to provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to express themselves in their own words, sharing insights on the effects of PACT and how the process of PACT preparation impacted their lives within and outside one teacher education program.

The research presented in this article is timely and adds an additional layer to the existing research data gathered as part of the PACT Candidate Reflection Survey (Pecheone & Chung, 2006, 2007). Since the instrument used in this research employed open-ended unstructured questions, the pre-service teachers had the freedom of response to express their opinions and share their thoughts. Moreover, we hope that this study will further the knowledge of teacher educators, administrators, policy makers, and anyone connected to teacher education programs with respect to the views of a group of pre-service teachers about PACT, in their own voices, as they neared the end of their year of preparation at the university.

Context for the Study

Most of the authors of this article are doctoral students who were participants in a two-quarter Teacher Education Fellowship and conducted this study under the supervision of a university faculty member, the sixth author. The university's School of Education established this competitive two-quarter fellowship, which includes coursework, fieldwork, and other activities for doctoral students interested in exploring teacher education. Fellows take seminars on the supervision of pre-service teachers and research on teacher education while working as secondary supervisors for a small number of pre-service teachers in the credential program and conducting a field research project.

Our awareness of the need for this study emerged from the authors' discussions with teacher education professors, supervisors, and pre-service teachers in our program, as well as from an inspirational group discussion with teacher educators from a wide range of California universities attending a conference on teacher education. At the conference, it became clear that having a greater understanding of pre-service teachers' PACT experience would give our department and other teacher education programs more information on how to better serve pre-service teachers.

We (the graduate student fellows) observed our supervisees during their seminar courses as they were introduced to PACT and worked with their primary supervisors to plan, prepare, and assemble the final portfolio. Although the overall tenor of the pre-service teachers' conversations around PACT was negative, filled with complaints about excessive writing demands, unavailability of video cameras, and the stress of assembling the portfolio at the same time as student teaching, we sensed that these new teachers might also be gaining from the experience. We conceived of a self-reported, open-ended survey as the most equitable means of hearing from as many pre-service teachers as

possible in the limited amount of time we had before the academic year ended and the participants left the university. Our primary interest was learning how they saw the process of doing PACT in terms of its effect on their development as teachers, both in the short and the long term.

Method

Program

This study was conducted during the 2006-2007 academic year at a UC campus that has piloted the PACT assessment since 2002. The teacher credential program at this university is very selective and relatively small. At the time of the study, a total of 137 pre-service teachers were enrolled in six different programs in both elementary education (Multiple Subject) and secondary education (Single Subject Agricultural Education, English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies/History). As part of the program, all pre-service teachers were required to complete PACT in order to be recommended for a California teaching credential.

Participants

The participants were pre-service teachers (n=73) from four different teacher credential program areas: Single Subject English (SSE), Single Subject Science (SSS), Single Subject Math (SSM), and Multiple Subject (MS). Out of the 73 returned surveys, 13 were submitted by student teachers enrolled in the Single Subject Science program, 8 in Single Subject Math, 20 in Single Subject English, and 32 in the Multiple Subject program. Seven program candidates were also working toward obtaining a BCLAD (Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development) emphasis in addition to a credential in their desired area.

Instrument

The instrument was designed by the researchers in collaboration with a Co-Principal Investigator who is a teacher educator. Although focus groups were not conducted with pre-service teachers, the survey questions were informed by the comments the pre-service teachers shared with the researchers and from discussions the researchers overheard during credential program seminars and breaks between classes. Since this research focuses on pre-service teachers' perspectives, the researchers agreed to administer an open-ended questionnaire to ensure the participants' freedom of response. The survey questions were intended to access the participants' affective reactions to the process of completing PACT in the context of their lives and this particular teacher education program.

The questionnaire consisted of three open-ended free-response items with seven (also open-ended) sub-items, constructed in an unstructured item format survey, in which the participants had complete freedom of response. To protect pre-service teachers' anonymity, the participants were asked to identify only their area of study on the survey. All pre-service teachers were given the same survey regardless of the program they were in. The survey asked how PACT affects candidates' student teaching, coursework, instructional practice, classroom management, and personal time. Candidates were also asked to report their views regarding PACT with respect to implementation and support.

Procedure

During the final week of the 2007 Spring Quarter, teacher education instructors were asked to present the survey to all pre-service teachers enrolled in the teacher education programs. The supervisors were then asked to leave the room. A pre-service teacher volunteer distributed the survey to peers and collected them after they were complete. Once collected, the surveys were placed in an envelope, which was sealed and delivered to a designated drop box. Although we intended for all student teachers to complete the survey, only 73 out of 137 enrolled participated. The researchers then transcribed the survey responses verbatim. To ensure interpretive agreement (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003) and accurately portray the meanings expressed by the participants, the researchers reviewed all collected data individually for inter-rater reliability. The analysis proceeded as follows: (1) individual review of the transcribed data and consideration of emerging themes and patterns; (2) collective discussion of the found themes and patterns for inter-rater reliability; (3) coding of data according to the key themes/patterns found; (4) quantification of the themes/patterns; and (5) analysis of the data by looking at frequencies and variations in responses to statements within and between participating groups as well as collectively.

Design

This exploratory study generated both qualitative and quantitative data. The research model adopted for this study is *Sequential Exploratory Design* (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The qualitative data collection and reviews (individual rater review and interpretation of participant responses and subsequent group review and coding) were then followed by quantitative categorization and analysis. Since the researchers (n=5) reviewed and coded original data individually and then met to discuss their findings in order to reach agreement, this review process contributed to the interpretive validity of the study

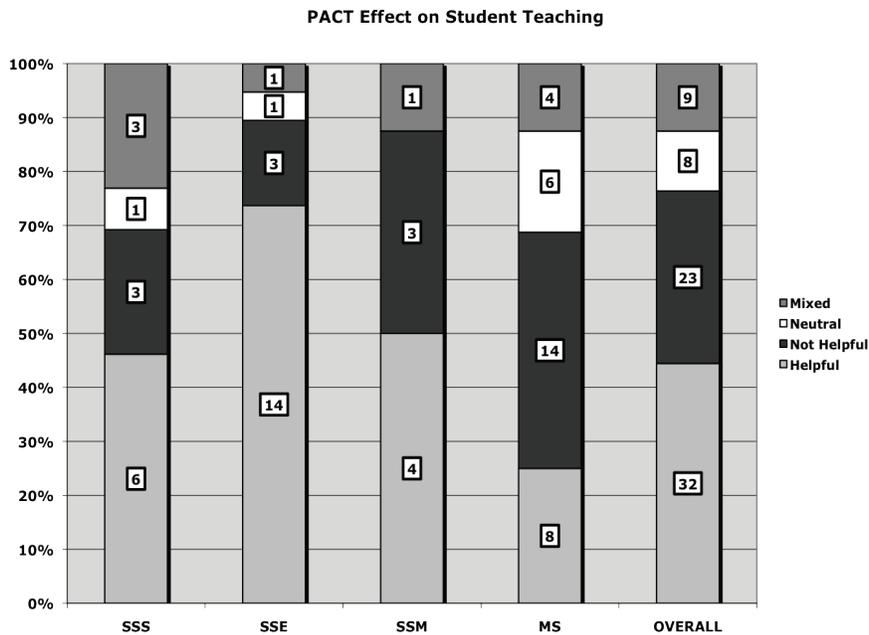
(Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Grounded theory (Glaser, 1992) was used to analyze the qualitative data, as the goal of this study was to formulate hypotheses based on conceptual ideas and to discern the participants' main concerns. The qualitative data in this study was weighted more heavily than quantitative data due to the nature of the study.

Findings

Effects on Student Teaching

The first question focused on the effects of PACT on pre-service (student) teaching. In total, 72 responses were received (RR=99%); 32 (44%) referred to PACT as being helpful in student teaching practices, 23 (32%) stated that PACT was not helpful, 8 (11%) responses were neutral stating that PACT did not affect their student teaching practices in either helpful or not helpful ways, and 9 (12.5%) responses were mixed, stating that PACT was helpful in some areas but not others. Single Subject English (SSE) participants commented favorably in higher numbers than any other group, with 76% of pre-service teachers in this

Figure 1
Effect of PACT on Student Teaching



cohort stating that PACT was helpful in their student teaching experiences. The Multiple Subject (MS) cohort reported experiencing the most difficulties. Forty-four percent of the MS students stated that PACT was not helpful in this respect, while only 25% stated that it was helpful.

The survey participants who stated that PACT was helpful in their student teaching practices pointed out the use of the video-taping and how watching themselves teaching helped them reflect on their teaching practices. They also stated that going through the PACT preparation process forced them to think about assessment in a meaningful way and plan carefully. Pre-service teachers who pointed out that PACT was not helpful in their student teaching practices stated that “time” consumption and “stress” were the biggest factors. The MS cohort experienced the most stress during PACT preparation. Students in this cohort stated that their stress levels during PACT preparation took away from their attention to the elementary students for whom they were responsible. In their own words, the “focus wasn’t on the students” (*MS Participant 8*); the “focus was on PACT” (*MS Participant 11*).

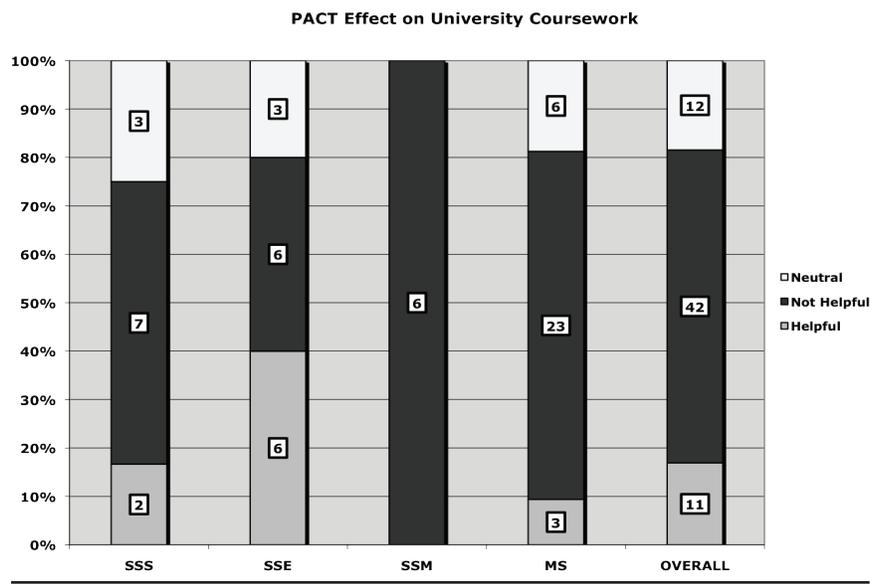
Effects on University Coursework

When pre-service teachers were asked to comment on how PACT affected their university coursework, the majority stated that the PACT process was not helpful. In total, 65 participants chose to answer this question (RR=89%), with no “mixed” responses. Sixty-five percent of the participants stated that PACT affected their university coursework in a negative way. Similar to their comments on the effects of the assessment on their student teaching, the pre-service teachers expressed that “time” and “stress” were the two biggest factors affecting their university coursework as a result of PACT preparation. One hundred percent of the Single Subject Math (SSM) and 72% of the MS students commented that PACT was not helpful in this respect. However, some students did find PACT helpful: PACT “forced me to be highly reflective” (*SSE Participant 9*); “[I] became so much better at reflection and [PACT helped me] focus on instructional strategies” (*SSE Participant 15*); PACT “made me do a lot of reflecting” (*MS Participant 32*); and “I was able to use this experience to continuously refer back to teaching and coursework and build upon [it]” (*SSS Participant 6*).

Effects on Instructional Practice

Overall, the pre-service teachers who chose to answer this sub-question (RR=66%) articulated that PACT affected their instructional practice in their student teaching placements in a helpful way. Fifty-nine percent of the total respondents, including 80% of those from the Single Subject

Figure 2
Effect of PACT on University Coursework



Math (SSM) cohort, stated that PACT was particularly helpful for their instructional practice. An overwhelming number of these participants identified “reflection on teaching practices” as the most useful outcome. Six participants stated that the video was particularly valuable in reflecting on their teaching and modifying their style when needed. Three pre-service teachers also stated that PACT helped them in improving their planning practices and directed their focus to certain subgroups of students such as English learners. The pre-service teachers who stated that PACT was not helpful in their instructional practice identified two primary reasons for their answers: “time away from [their] students and teaching” and “stress.”

Effects on Classroom Management

The responses received for this sub-question were highly neutral. A total of 59 participants (RR=81%) chose to answer this question. Fifty-one percent stated that PACT did not affect their classroom management in either a helpful or a not helpful way, 34% stated that PACT was helpful in their classroom management practices, and 15% stated that PACT was not helpful. Fifteen participants (75% of all the positive responses for this sub-question) who stated that PACT had helped them with classroom

Figure 3
Effect of PACT on Instructional Practice

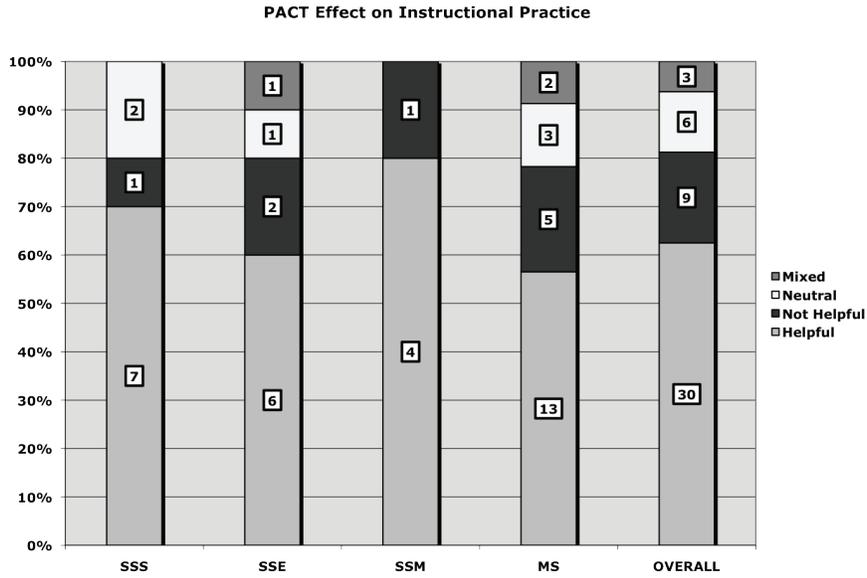
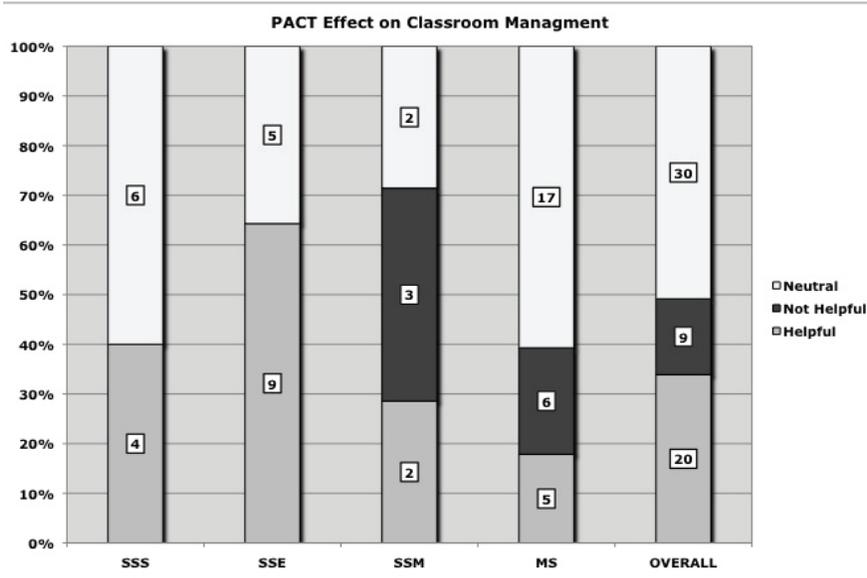


Figure 4
Effect of PACT on classroom management

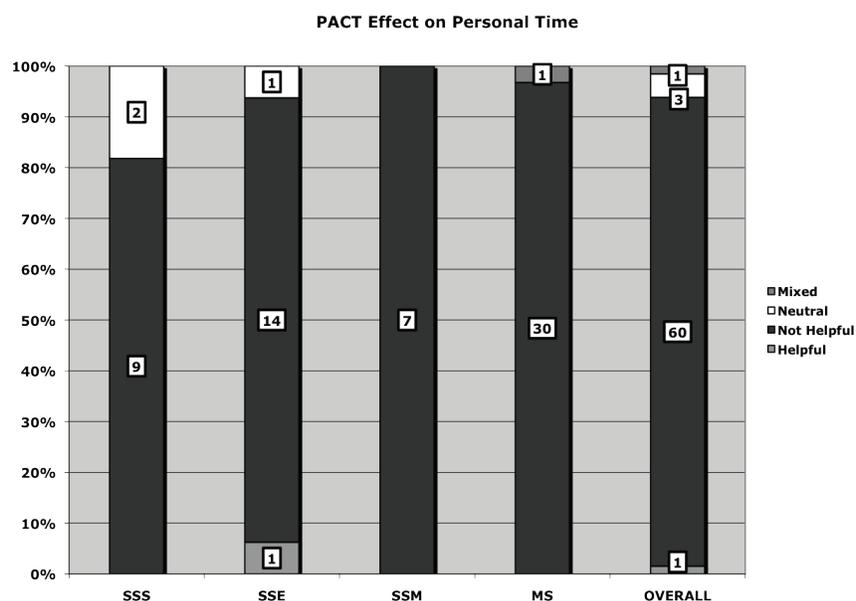


management referred to the positive effects of observing their teaching on the video. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers acknowledged that videotaping helped them identify certain behavioral issues that they had not noticed prior to videotaping; they modified their practices as a result. One SSE respondent noted, “I noticed many behaviors (on the part of my students) that I wouldn’t have without the video” (*SSE Participant 1*). Six of the participants (a minority) who stated that PACT did not help with their classroom management pointed out that the process of videotaping served as a distraction to their students during the lesson as they were teaching.

Effects on Personal Time

An overwhelming majority (94%) of participants who answered this question stated that PACT affected their personal time and life in a significantly negative way. A total of 65 pre-service teachers (RR=89%) chose to answer this question. They reported major sleep deprivation during their preparation of PACT, severe effects on personal relationships and health, and a significant “stress” factor. The only positive answer received for this sub-question stated that although PACT required much time,

Figure 5
Effect of PACT on Personal Time

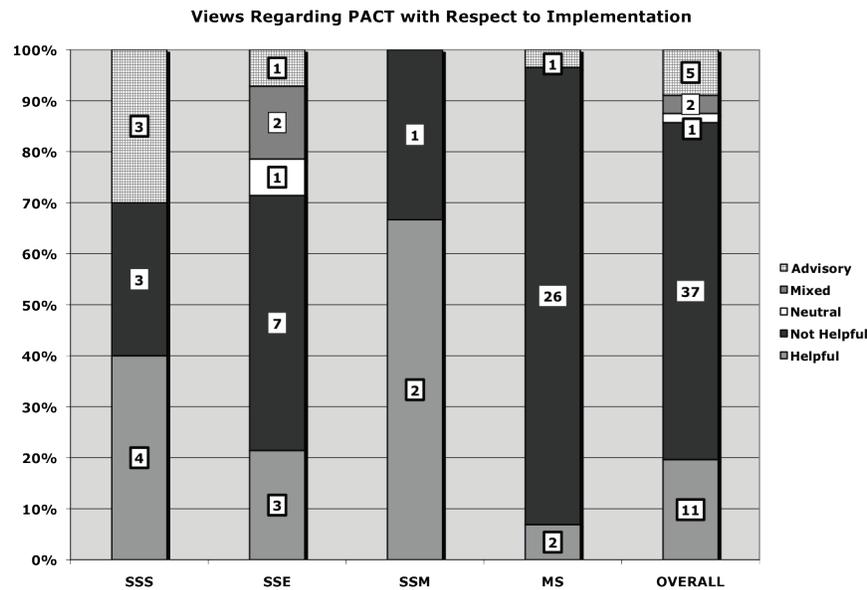


the participant had managed the time well due to being able to complete PACT in “chunks” rather than all at once (*SSE Participant 11*).

Views Regarding PACT with Respect to Implementation

The majority of participants who chose to answer this sub-question were not satisfied with how PACT was implemented. The response rate for this question, although varied among cohorts, was 77% (n=56). Overall, 37 participants (66%) who chose to answer this question stated that the implementation of PACT was not helpful. Many expressed concerns with the redundancy of the reflection prompts, a lack of technical support, issues with timing, and conflicts with pre-service teaching placements. The most satisfied cohort was Single Subject Math (SSM), although it is important to note that the number of SSM cohort participants contributing to this survey was relatively small. The cohort that experienced the most difficulties and also had the highest response rate (91%) was Multiple Subject (MS). Several of the MS participants expressed frustration with the way that their entire group was required to teach and videotape their lessons during the same week. In addition to categories used in the previous analyses, the researchers added an “advisory” category to this section during coding due to the advisory, rather than

Figure 6
Views Regarding PACT with Respect to Implementation



evaluative, nature of some statements. The advisory responses showed that pre-service teachers would have liked to receive more feedback from their supervisors while assembling their portfolios and would have liked to do a sample version of PACT earlier in the academic year for feedback purposes. The advisory responses also suggest that schedules at the schools where student teaching takes place and filming schedules should be coordinated and that breaking up the PACT assessment into multiple, smaller sections would have been beneficial.

Views Regarding PACT with Respect to Support Received

A total of 69 pre-service teachers chose to answer this question (RR=95%), with less than half (46%) of the respondents stating that the support they received was helpful. When the “helpful” responses were categorized by the sources of support received, the following scale emerged: supervisors (46%), resident teachers (16%), and peers and courses/instructional material (6%). A majority of the responses expressing frustration with support received stated that resident teachers were least helpful or had “nothing to do” (*SSS Participant 10*) with the process of PACT preparation. Lack of knowledge of what PACT entails or indifference to the importance and significance of the PACT assessment

Figure 7
Views Regarding PACT with Respect to Support Received

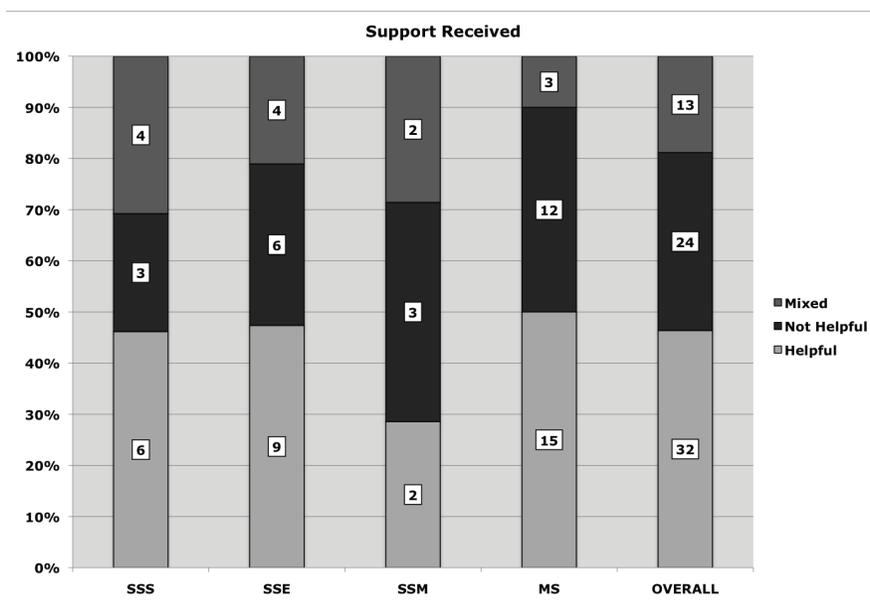
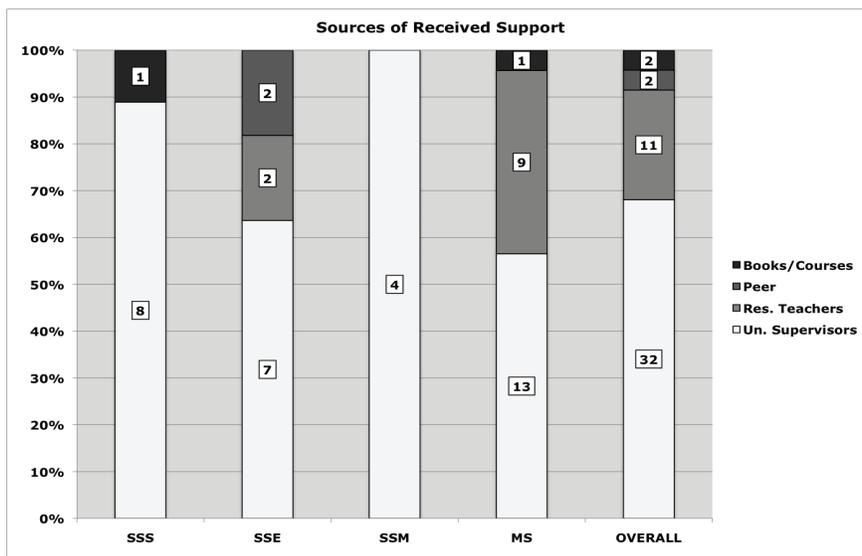


Figure 8
Sources of Support Received



were some of the more commonly mentioned reasons for why resident teachers were not helpful. Other participants mentioned that they were uncertain how much assistance they could ask of their resident teachers or their supervisors.

Discussion

The impact of PACT on pre-service teachers' lives, as shown in the findings above, provided the basis for the major themes identified below. These themes appeared frequently in participant responses across survey items. The first, that PACT preparation took away time from participants' personal and professional lives, highlights one of the major drawbacks of the assessment. The second, that the PACT process contributed to participants' development as teachers, confirms one of the intended outcomes of the assessment ("A Brief Overview", n.d.) and the findings from previous research (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). The final theme, the significance of support received or not received during PACT preparation, also highlighted in prior findings (Pecheone & Chung, 2006), leads to overall implications and recommendations of the study.

PACT Preparation Is Time Consuming

One of the major findings of this study is that PACT is a complex portfolio that takes pre-service teachers much time to develop. The

intricate preparation process requires technological and pedagogical knowledge, extensive planning, and a successful implementation of the lesson depicted in PACT. These processes impacted the pre-service teachers' already busy schedules, which included a full complement of graduate-level courses, unpaid student teaching, and lesson planning five days a week, as well as maintenance of their personal lives. Concerns about time emerged primarily in the survey questions asking about the effects of PACT on participants' university coursework and on their personal time. However, responses throughout the survey identified time and stress factors.

A number of the responses to the question about personal time used humor, possibly reflecting the depth of the participants' frustration with the process. Several participants included emoticons (smiling or unhappy faces) in their commentaries, and many employed all-capital letters. A few mentioned becoming physically ill from the stress of the process and from a lack of time for exercise and healthy eating, and others indicated that their personal relationships had suffered. One response, from a Single Subject Science student, captures the character of these preservice teachers' reactions: "Grrr... don't even go there! I didn't sleep for a week to finish. Let alone spend time with friends, boyfriend, etc." (*SSS Participant 7*). Many respondents also regretted having to spend their university Spring Break working on PACT, and several commented that PACT was due around the same time as job applications.

Furthermore, participants expressed concern that their other university coursework and student teaching practices were impacted by their focus on PACT preparation. The current program structure requires pre-service teachers to assemble their PACT portfolios while taking full-time graduate coursework and student teaching for at least two hours a day. The participants felt that it was very difficult to fulfill satisfactorily all the program expectations. Some participants pointed out that they were compelled to ask for extensions on their other coursework, submit assignments late, and put less effort into these papers than they normally would do. During winter quarter, simultaneous with PACT preparation, credential students conducted teacher research projects in their classrooms. Several participants in both the Multiple and Single Subject cohorts commented that they were unable to implement these teaching interventions well because of PACT. Finally, many participants expressed that they felt like the other classes (not included in preparation of PACT portfolio) for which they were responsible in their student teaching placements suffered because they were unable to invest as much time or energy to planning and teaching those students.

PACT Helped Pre-Service Teachers Learn about Their Teaching

Despite the drain on their time for completing their coursework and planning lessons, the pre-service teachers do appear to have learned about their teaching practice from the PACT process. In the questions asking about the effects of the assessment on their student teaching and on their instructional practice, many participants reported having favorable experiences. Although the majority of participants were neutral in their assessment of the effects of PACT on their classroom management, others described learning about themselves or their students from the videotaping process. Pre-service teachers across the credential program noticed that they had become more aware of their own actions, their students' behaviors, and ways that they could better plan lessons and assess their students to address the state standards. These reports support Pecheone and Chung's (2006) findings on the skills learned as a result of PACT preparation process.

PACT's requirements for designing a unit and differentiating instruction to benefit students of varying abilities also helped participants become better teachers. A few noted that they had not previously thought about or recognized their English learner (EL) students' needs, and others pointed out that they had realized that they needed to be more deliberate in encouraging students' critical thinking. Many participants mentioned the benefit of having to incorporate state standards into their unit plans, as well as the challenge of thinking long-term in designing both lessons and appropriate assessment instruments. One SSM participant noted, "With PACT, I was able to break out of the mold that my teaching was in. The pressure of it made me create some great lesson plans and try new things" (*SSM Participant 8*). A Multiple Subject participant similarly reflected, "I love activity based learning so I was able to go beyond the worksheet [publisher's] curriculum and create a group of 3 lessons that were ... hands on + engaging" (*MS Participant 1*).

***The Significance of Support:
Implications for Teacher Educators***

The support received, type of support received, and the timing of the received support, as reflected in previous research (Pecheone & Chung, 2006), proved to be very significant in pre-service teachers' experiences during the PACT preparation. As the participants in this study expressed, the type of support received and when they received it influenced their PACT portfolio development. Satisfaction with the implementation of the assessment and with the support received varied both among and within subject areas.

Those participants most pleased with the process felt supported by

their supervisors and the program. Others expressed concerns that their supervisors were unable or unwilling to help them, and their resident teachers did not know or understand what PACT was.

Program administrators, professors, and teacher educators can help their students by scaffolding the PACT process into their coursework and by providing formative feedback throughout the process. In addition, pre-service teachers may also benefit from learning that many of the tasks in the assessment can be supplemented through reflections they have already written in their prior coursework. Perhaps pointing this factor out more explicitly would help counter some of the anxiety of the PACT preparation process and reduce the participants' perceptions that reflections are redundant.

The time during the academic year in which PACT is implemented is also another important support factor for program administrators and teacher educators to consider. During the year covered in this study, PACT was introduced in early Winter quarter to the pre-service teachers, who were given the rest of the quarter to work on their portfolios. At the time PACT was due, the Single Subject students were only a month into their long-term student teaching placements, while the Multiple Subject students were wrapping up their long-term student teaching placements. Neither the beginning nor the end of a student teaching placement appears to have been ideal timing for PACT implementation.

Flexibility on the part of program administrators can also be helpful. Those participants who expressed more satisfaction with the implementation of the PACT assessment also mentioned having the opportunity and flexibility to choose when in a certain period of time they could plan and teach their lessons. Those who were less satisfied, in contrast, expressed frustration that they were required to complete the teaching during one specific week. If supervisors and teacher educators are able to provide broader windows of time for the individual tasks of PACT, then pre-service teachers may feel less pressure to complete it at an exact moment in time.

Similarly, academic, technological, and emotional support from supervisors, teacher educators, and resident teachers is essential to pre-service teachers' satisfaction with the PACT process. University programs can facilitate resident teachers' understanding of the assessment and what is expected of pre-service teachers through better distribution of information prior to the PACT assessment implementation. Resident teachers should also be advised on ways to help their student teachers develop Teaching Events that fit within both district adopted curriculum requirements and PACT expectations. This issue was particularly pertinent to the Multiple Subject cohort. Supervisors and faculty should

work together to establish a program-wide set of norms for supporting pre-service teachers so that there is not any confusion over how much assistance is acceptable. These decisions need to be made prior to introducing the PACT assignments to the credential students and maintained across programs.

Future Studies

In future studies, we intend to develop instruments to survey not only pre-service teachers, but also teacher educators and resident teachers. In addition, only one questionnaire was given. It would be more informative to give multiple questionnaires at different stages of the PACT preparation process for greater reliability. Follow-up interviews with participants would also help put their comments in context and allow deeper exploration of their concerns.

Although this study does not consider demographic data of pre-service teacher participants, in future studies it would be helpful to compare the demographic data of pre-service teachers from various groups to draw inferences as to how different subgroups are affected. The time constraints that were frequently mentioned by the participants in this study may raise even greater concerns in programs where the pre-service teachers are more likely also to be working or raising families.

Conclusion

This study has provided a small window on the perspectives of a few pre-service teachers and their self-reported experiences in assembling the PACT portfolio. Some of the findings, such as the redundancy of reflective tasks, the importance of timing, and the significance of received support, are aligned with previous studies (Pecheone & Chung, 2006, 2007; Selvester *et al.*, 2006). However, two new findings have surfaced in this study: a lack of knowledge about the PACT assessment on the part of resident teachers and their potential to support pre-service teachers, and the concerns expressed with PACT preparation by the Multiple Subject credential cohort.

Perhaps one of the most useful findings of this study is *the local factor*: how school placements impact student teachers' ability to complete PACT. It is essential for all resident teachers to have an overall understanding of what PACT or other performance assessments entail in order to give needed flexibility (and in some cases feedback) to their pre-service teachers in their preparation of the assessment portfolios. Moreover, to a degree, the school administration must also be aware of certain teaching modalities that pre-services teachers are asked to

implement as part of their teaching unit of the assessment portfolios, so there is no friction between pre-service teachers, their resident teachers, the curriculum, and the school administration. Teacher education programs must take the lead in bridging the awareness gap between individual schools and the requirements of PACT.

As we learn more about the effects of performance assessments, we need to continually reexamine the way teacher education programs are structured. In the process of learning from each other and identifying factors that help pre-service teachers succeed, we will not only ensure better teacher education programs, but will also ensure programs that graduate better teachers.

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Notes

¹ FAST was approved by CCTC in June 2008. The current guidelines permit the use of this instrument at CSU Fresno only (CCTC, 2008b).

² An overall Response Rate (RR) was calculated based on the total responses received divided by the total number of participants (n=73). Cohort RR was calculated based on the number of responses received from the participants in each cohort divided by the total number of the participants in each participating cohort.

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