Accreditation bodies have included professional dispositions as part of teacher preparation and candidate evaluation, yet many ESOL teacher educators are understandably confused about how to assess them in their programs. Teacher educators are charged with fostering the qualities and dispositions that will help their teacher candidates be successful in the classroom. Yet how do we change attitudes and dispositions in teacher candidates who may enter preparation programs with a mindset that will be detrimental to diverse students? This paper reflects on the authors’ own practice in addressing professionalism in general and professional dispositions in particular, and suggests effective practices in addressing them, including the importance of modeling the practices during teacher training so teacher candidates can learn to apply them to their own practice. The authors use detailed descriptions, evaluations, and implications of a critical incident of an ESOL teacher candidate’s field experience; offer suggestions and specific activities that can be used by teacher educators to address professionalism; and, based on their experiences as program directors, raise compelling arguments for the use of critical incident analysis and evaluation in teacher preparation programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Professional dispositions, “professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities” (NCATE, 2008), are an essential part of teacher preparation, yet many English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher educators are understandably perplexed about how to address them in teacher education programs. Professional dispositions are required components that must be assessed for accreditation procedures; therefore, teacher educators are charged with fostering the qualities and dispositions that will help their teacher candidates achieve success in the classroom (Kim, Grigsby, & Micek, 2013). Yet, how do we change attitudes and dispositions in some teacher candidates who may enter preparation programs with a mindset that will be detrimental to diverse students?

Several commonalities exist between us and our motivation for this study. We span three states (New York, Ohio, and Illinois) and are program coordinators and TESOL course instructors at private, small to mid-size urban and suburban institutions. All three private universities are tuition-driven; therefore we are mindful of our students and their placements in local cooperating schools, their reputations (and ours), and student retention rates and enrollment numbers, as we are competing with other universities including nearby larger state universities (Micek, Kim, & Weinstein, 2011/12). We have been working as program coordinators and teacher trainers of both ESOL teacher candidates and teacher candidates who are working with English language learners (ELLs) across academic disciplines and grade levels.

We have each seen professionalism concerns in some candidates going through our teacher education programs. Through the years, we have had many students who have shone brightly in both the university classroom and the field or clinical experiences. During the same time, we have had students whose star has shone rather dimly. Many of the latter have done just fine in the university classroom, attending class regularly, turning in assignments on time, and earning good, if not excellent, course grades. In the field, however, they have caused concern if not embarrassment. What can be done to improve the professional dispositions of these troublesome teacher candidates? This question has led us to explore professional dispositions through a critical incident case analysis and evaluation.

Examining the discourse of professionalism in the literature uncovers as many questions as there are answers. We describe the research focusing on professionalism as lenses through which behaviors can be articulated and a professional identity is formed and represented, as also indicated by Edmond and Hayler (2013). Studies on professionalism, while a broad concept, can provide perspectives and voices that contribute to the education field’s debates and policies relating to professionalism in general and professional dispositions in particular.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on professionalism can provide perspectives and voices that contribute to the education field’s debates and policies relating to professionalism in general and professional dispositions in particular. Examining the discourse of professionalism in the literature uncovers as many questions as there are answers. Any discourse on professionalism first begins by addressing the qualities, characteristics, and competencies that a profession desires of its members. We describe the research focusing on professionalism as lenses through which behaviors can be articulated and a professional identity is formed and represented, as also indicated by Edmond and Hayler (2013).

This section extends the conversation of professionalism by dealing with the areas of medicine and nursing, engineering, and business along with teacher education. This section is intended to highlight the current issues that many fields are debating: how to provide students with knowledge that includes a focus on professionalism, how to graduate students as “professionals,” and how to define and identify the goals of professionalism as the term pertains to their field.

Teacher Education

It is the role and responsibility of teacher education programs to support teacher candidates’ subject matter competencies and teaching techniques (Kim et al., 2013). Yet becoming more evident as an important influence of school and academic success in PreK-12 students are the personal characteristics and qualities of the teacher, what Malm (2009) calls “interpersonal/relational and emotional competences” (p. 82). This aspect of teacher development cannot be ignored because teaching is “an emotional practice” (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835). These personal characteristics and teacher qualities fall under the realm of professionalism, a word that can sometimes allude to esoteric and ambiguous ideas that are not universally conceptualized. Schuck, Gordon, and Buchanan (2008) posit a need for a broader understanding of professionalism and teaching quality in teacher education. Malm (2009) asks, “What characterises a good teacher? How well do we understand and cater for the development of the whole person (i.e., taking into account the intellectual, social and emotional aspects of personal and professional development)?” (p. 77).

Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin, and Vanderlee (2013) report on their findings of practicing early childhood teachers’ perceptions of professionalism as it relates to their roles, ideas, and responsibilities. Their study was conducted with 25 teachers in Canada, Nigeria, and South Africa. The study addressed self-perceptions of early childhood teachers as professionals; impacts of values, beliefs and experiences on their concept of professionalism; and contextual variations that existed in conceptualizations of their professionalism. The study found aspects of professionalism that were common in the experiences of the teachers in their respective countries that manifested mostly as a caring ethic. This study provides support for advocating for caring as a social principle within
education, while also suggesting an ethic of caring could be a result of socially constructed ideals of professionalism.

**Medicine and Nursing**

The importance of professionalism and how to develop a core competency within prospective candidates extends across multiple professions well beyond education. Hultman et al. (2013) is an example of how the medical field addresses professionalism as a core competency for graduate medical education. Within the medical field, a professionalism curriculum exists as a core competency for graduate medical education. Designed to improve professionalism in plastic surgery, the authors of the study developed a 6-week, 12-hour course for 30 healthcare professionals (faculty, nurses, residents, and medical students). The course included teaching methods such as didactic lectures, a journal club, small group discussions, and a book review. The topics of the course focused on professionalism and leadership and included: (1) professionalism in our culture, (2) leadership styles, (3) modeling professional behavior, (4) leading a team, (5) managing oneself, and (6) leading while you work.

Through data collection that included participant questionnaires, as well as patient satisfaction surveys that measured patient experiences for the six months before and after the course, only 56.5% of their respondents felt the course was a good use of their time, yet 73.9% agreed that the course would help them become a better professional, and 82.6% would recommend the course to others. Hultman et al. (2013) concluded that a focused curriculum in professionalism may have promoted knowledge of professionalism in their participants and improved overall behavior but may not have affected individual attitudes. Even though one of the participants resigned and two others left the division after being counseled on issues of professionalism, the remaining participants’ patient complaints decreased, and patient satisfaction increased from feedback they received on the patient surveys. Recognizing the difficulty in addressing this topic, the authors maintained that efforts toward assessing, teaching, and influencing their candidates’ professionalism are still valuable and should be pursued by educators both to accomplish the requirements of graduate medical education and to improve the plastic surgery organization’s performance as a whole.

Monrouze, Rees, and Hu (2011) used discourse analysis to determine the definitions of professionalism that 200 students from three medical schools based their actions on to allow the researchers to understand how students conceptualized professionalism in their practice. It is the charge of medical educators to develop a curriculum of professionalism that “emphasizes, supports and measures students’ professionalism” (p. 585). Within this context, medical students are expected to do more than act professionally; they are expected to become professionals. The challenge is similar to teacher educators’ dilemma in that developing professionalism is neither an easy nor a straightforward task, nor is there a consensus as to what medical professionalism is. Monrouze et al. found that students who received opportunities to engage in patient interaction early in their programs and had opportunities to engage in conversations about professionalism demonstrated a deep and
A complex understanding of professionalism that included an embodiment of the characteristics (i.e., they took on the characteristics), while students who learned mainly through lectures did not. They concluded that providing students with multiple opportunities to engage actively in meaning-making activities on topics of professionalism encouraged an embodied and sophisticated working knowledge.

Rhodes, Schutt, Langham, and Bilotta (2012) worked to clarify effective ways to instill professionalism in undergraduate nursing students. They reported on a biannual nursing program that focused student learning on professionalism tenets in nursing. Utilizing a seminar structure, the researchers explored professional issues while also promoting critical thinking in the implementation of Miller’s Wheel of Professionalism in Nursing (Adams & Miller, 2001, as cited in Rhodes et al., 2012). This model was a framework for the discussion, which allowed for several pedagogical strategies to be used, including short slide shows, interactive lectures given by area experts, and student-led small group discussions. The group discussions centered on professionalism scenarios identified by Miller, whose inclusion increased faculty satisfaction as well as garnered more student participation than had been observed previously. It was suggested that this framework resulted in a deeper understanding of professional behavior and its development throughout the curriculum.

Engineering

Continuing the discussion further into engineering, the question of what makes a professional engineer and why it is important to be a professional seems just as contested. Hong and Shull (2010) state that much progress has been made in the area of attracting and retaining science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students in programs, but highlight the need for more research focused on “understanding the values and impact faculty could have on the learning outcomes of students” (p. 266). Using a case study interview approach, their exploratory study found the six engineering students to be successful in their undergraduate engineer program but revealed common themes of frustration. These included lack of quality faculty and the absence of quality teaching. The authors found that while the participants saw their professors as a source of either support or great frustration, it was concluded that faculty variables do significantly impact the progress and sustainability of STEM students.

In The Courage to Teach, Palmer (1998) observed that fear in students is a powerful negative influence that can inhibit thinking and developing as exhibited in Hong and Shull’s (2010) study. Students “are afraid of failing, of not understanding, of being drawn into issues they would rather avoid, of having their ignorance exposed, or their prejudices challenged, of looking foolish in front of their peers” (p. 37). What Palmer suggests here is that school and teachers are supposed to be the models of knowledge and impart that knowledge through a process of teaching and learning. Schools, however, can be frightening, and teachers can be impediments to learning when their professional postures are not ones that encourage multiple stages of learning or honor the diversity of cultures.
languages, and language varieties in the classroom or the different ways of knowing and the varied paths students take to get there.

Business Education

According to Trank and Rynes (2003), business education has improved from where it was in the 1950s, when the training was perceived as being too narrow and vocationalized. Business education has since then experienced an evolution of sorts, making significant progress toward professionalizing the field and enhancing its scientific and theoretical base. As in engineering education, there are two main areas of schooling that focus on technical skills, known as hard skills, and professionalism, which falls into the area of soft skills (Robles, 2012). According to Robles (2012), hard skills are the abilities that come from one’s knowledge, ability to do something well, and aptitude for something, such as a craft, trade, or job requiring manual dexterity or special training. Soft skills are character traits, attitudes, and behaviors, rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Defined so, soft skills are intangible and nontechnical, the personality-specific skills that determine one’s strengths as a facilitator, leader, or negotiator. Parsons (2008) defines soft skills as character traits that enhance a person’s interactions, job performance, and career prospects, and are continually honed through applying them in one’s daily life. Soft skills are developed from the combination of interpersonal (people) skills and personal (career) attributes (Robles, 2012).

Trank and Rynes (2003) highlight Abbott’s arguments for the “abstracting ability” (p. 191) necessary for the survivability of professionals. Professional knowledge is generalized and abstract, and professional expertise is built from a theoretical and conceptual foundation on which professionals first learn and then grow to expand the knowledge base. Yet the authors find the value of professional ideals has diminished in today’s modern business education discourse.

Just as medicine and law have articulated the values that support their practice, Trank and Rynes (2003) posit that business education must also ask, “What are the transcendent values that might be thought of as fundamental to education for a business profession?” (p. 203). The authors ponder a set of standards for business education that will prevent multiple forces and pressures from de-professionalizing the field, such as removing ethics from the core of many programs, frequently changing curricula to reflect market trends and business fads, and the intolerance exhibited by students for theory and theoretical and historical underpinnings (Zell, 2001). Although students expect coursework to be directly applicable and immediately relevant to their current or future jobs, “Giving students skills in applying current commodified knowledge is like giving them a fish, whereas giving them professional education is like teaching them how to fish” (p. 194).

Teacher Beliefs and Core Ethics

The term professionalism should include a set of agreed-upon criteria consistent with the needs and values of the field or discipline in which it is housed and must also include ethical dimensions for how to determine the quality of teaching and what good teaching
must contain. The challenge is that ethical considerations are contextual and highly individual. As our teacher identity is also contextual and develops over time through experience and participation (Gordon & Fittler, 2004), our core ethics may remain deep within us as subconscious, implicit understandings of how we perceive the world.

Akin to teacher beliefs, core ethics are one’s fundamental means of perceiving and making sense of the world. Not only have these core ethics been accumulating over years of life experiences and schooling, they are highly resistant to change (Korthagen, 1993) or influence from outside forces. But as Malm (2009) states, “prospective teachers’ existing knowledge and beliefs have been found to play a crucial role in how they experience and/or envision their professional role” (p. 82). If this is the case, Richardson (1996) believes fundamental aspects like teacher beliefs and core ethics should be a “focus for instruction and a target for change during teacher education” (p. 105).

Ethical practice, therefore, means considering, reflecting on, and reconsidering the hidden assumptions we have that may also be the foundation for who we are as teachers. Teachers’ roles and positions as “raced, classed, and gendered” (Glazier, 2005, p. 231) beings will affect how their students view them. If ethical concerns are not addressed and teachers do not have the opportunity to investigate the hidden assumptions that underlie their teaching and their identities as teachers, they may inadvertently privilege the cultural knowledge and experiences of like-minded students over those from diverse backgrounds. An ethical responsibility any teacher or teacher educator has is to consider what students are learning and “to reflect on who has the opportunity to learn what” (Renshaw, 2003, p. 358).

Providing activities and experiences that enable teachers to deconstruct their own practice and explore ways to enhance their instruction will serve to develop the concept of professionalism in teacher candidates (McGettrick, 2005; Schuck et al., 2008). This review of the literature on teacher professionalism within education and other fields raises an important question: is it within a teacher educator’s capability to guide candidates through a program that will assist them in developing the “right” professionalism, or does the program attract an individual who already possesses the professional quality that draws him or her to the profession in the first place? Torff and Byrnes (2011) found that teachers having positive attitudes about professional development were more likely to have beneficial learning experiences within their professional development experiences. Thus, one may ask if it is more likely that candidates who are attracted to teaching in the first place already possess the tenets of professionalism the field is seeking to grow within its future teachers, or if it is truly possible to cultivate a professionalism that may be contrastive to the one the individual has congenitally.

The authors of this paper use detailed descriptions, evaluations, and implications of a critical incident in an ESOL teacher candidate’s field experience; offer suggestions and specific activities that can be used by teacher educators to address professionalism; and, based on their experiences as program directors, raise compelling arguments for their implementation and use in teacher preparation programs.
METHOD

We have chosen to investigate professionalism in ESOL teacher education through critical incident analysis, a research method used in the social sciences and education for some time now. According to ProDAIT (n.d.), a critical incident is something we interpret as a unique problem or challenge, such as a teacher candidate who is not conducting him or herself with appropriate levels of professional behavior, rather than a routine occurrence, such as students constantly arriving late for class or talking when other students are presenting their ideas. Thiel (1999) says that a critical incident is “essentially a case study with a view to describing what happened and why” (p. 44).

In their seminal article, Flanagan and Schmid (1959) briefly describe the critical incidence approach. The conditions set up to define a series of critical incidents, they state, “are intended to obtain a representative, objective set of factual events all judged by the observer to contribute to a single aim or conclusion” (p. 136). The conditions include the definition of the situation observed, the relevance of the situation to the stated aim or conclusion, and the qualifications of the observer. “A sample of critical incidents thus defined,” they continue, “can be treated like any other set of observed data to describe, to define, to compare, or to evaluate specific hypotheses” (p. 136). Critical incident analysis, ProDAIT explains, is “an approach to dealing with challenges in everyday practice.” As reflective practitioners, “we need to pose problems about our practice, refusing to accept ‘what is’. We need to explore incidents that occur in day-to-day work in order to understand them better and find alternative ways of reacting and responding to them.” Critical incident analysis can help teachers to know more about how they operate, question their own practice, and develop their understanding and improve their professional judgment.

According to Flanagan and Schmid, the critical incident approach has a long history. In 1959, they wrote that investigators had been collecting “accounts of observed activities following certain rules and procedures and referring to them as critical incidents” (p.136) for almost 15 years. Thiel (1999) adds that critical incidents have been used in cross-cultural training programs, especially in the US, since the early 1980s. The approach involves the examination of critical incidents experienced by those who have crossed cultures.

Critical incident analysis is useful for identifying elements of an issue that can be used to develop “an increasing understanding of and control over professional judgment, and thereby over practice” (Tripp, 1993, p. 24). The disadvantage of this approach may be that there is an over focus on the abnormal and unusual case, thereby missing the common, everyday issues (Ngo, n.d.). In addition, this technique requires an informed understanding of the events being examined and is most effective when studied by the participants closest to the event. Lastly, in a critical incident analysis, all vulnerabilities are laid bare and, as people may feel exposed, this approach requires sensitivity to and for all sides involved.

Farrell (2008) and Thiel (1999) have applied critical incident analysis to TESOL. Farrell (2008) studied Singaporean trainee teachers enrolled in a one-year Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) program to certify them as English language teachers. As
part of their PGDE theory classes, trainees were assigned to team teach a set of lessons in a secondary school and keep a journal in which they described and reflected on at least two critical incidents that occurred during their teaching. Results indicate that while analyzing critical incidents may be useful for teachers in training, teacher educators should realize that classifying such incidents into neat categories “may be problematic” and take care when making such an assignment (p. 3). Farrell concludes that as a result of reflecting on critical incidents, participants were more able to face the realities of teaching. Thiel (1999) used critical incidents in ESOL teacher training, drawing on the experiences of Malaysian teachers in training. The trainees were pre-service secondary school teachers undergoing a BEd TESOL program at the government college in Kuala Lumpur. Thiel had trainees record and reflect on, critical incidents during their practice teaching. The case studies generated, Thiel concludes, provide a starting point for exploring critical incidents as a tool for “awareness-raising, problem-solving and sharing teaching experiences” (p. 51).

We believe that we have met Flanagan and Schmid’s conditions for the approach because we (a) describe a critical incident in ESOL teacher education, (b) relate the incident to professionalism in ESOL teacher education, and (c) have extensive experience in ESOL teacher education and program administration.

FINDINGS

Describing the Context of the Incident

Harry (like all names, a pseudonym) was a middle-aged male with a teaching certificate in secondary social studies. He had failed to get a job in his field (whether this was a reflection of a tight job market or of Harry’s abilities is unknown), which is one reason he sought TESOL endorsement: to increase his employability. Harry appeared to be a strong applicant, with a good undergraduate and graduate GPA, language learning and teaching experience, and experience abroad, all of which were identified as strong indicators of academic success as a TESOL candidate in Micek, Kim, and Weinstein’s (2011/2012) study. Harry had spent time in Mexico growing up and had taught English in a post-secondary setting there before applying to the program. With near-native fluency in Spanish, he had also served as a bilingual instructional assistant in a local school district. His letters of recommendation for admission to the program were strong; one came from a respected (full) professor at the institution.

Harry had done well in his early field experience (40 hours of observation and interaction in his first course), which he had completed in an urban high school with a male cooperating teacher. In his third semester, he took the TESOL instructional methods course, which includes a field experience (40 hours of observation, interaction, and participation). He was placed in a wealthy suburban high school with a female cooperating teacher, Maxine. Harry’s methods teacher, Michaela, a full-time faculty member, normally meets with every cooperating teacher and observes every candidate teaching a lesson, but this semester she was unable to carry out the observation. The course had gone over the cap
at the last moment, and the best adjunct that could be found to take the extra section was a practicing P-12 teacher who could not leave her classroom to observe candidates. Michaela decided to observe only candidates pursuing initial licensure in TESOL, who had no teaching experience, and leave the evaluation of endorsement candidates like Harry, who were already licensed to teach, entirely to the cooperating teacher. It seemed a good solution to the problem.

At the end of the experience, Harry received an evaluation that was, quantitatively, between satisfactory and good (2.6 out of 4). The evaluation was based on the Praxis III (Educational Testing Service, 2010) domains: I. Organizing for Student Learning, II. Creating the Learning Environment, III. Teaching Performance, and IV. Personal and Professional Qualities. In her (optional) written comments, however, Maxine indicated that Harry’s performance was unsatisfactory from a qualitative perspective. She commented negatively on his planning (he didn’t make the changes she requested), rapport with students (he favored Spanish-speaking students), teaching performance (lessons were beyond students), and professionalism (his manner both within and without the classroom were unprofessional). Maxine’s comments (detailed below), were at odds with her scores.

In terms of Domain I, Maxine wrote, Harry “made [only] very slight changes to lessons after I asked for changes. Completely misread the level of the students. Did not understand how to teach writing an introduction (with a hook) to an intermediate class.” For Domain II, she pointed out that Harry had “read a book during lunch duty,” a comment that would seem more fit for Domain IV. Under Domain III, she wrote that Harry ‘did not see the reason for the observation, felt it was a hoop he “had to jump through”’ and “both lessons were above the target level for Harry’s students. When I told him this, no changes were made.” Finally, for Domain IV, she made several comments about Harry, including “dressed below the standard at [our school],” “seemed [not to] understand that his lack of enthusiasm for teaching at [our school] would have a direct effect on my evaluation,” and “spoke Spanish multiple times in an English classroom. Only 50% of the students [speak] Spanish so he was not only NOT speaking the target language, he was neglecting the other language students.” It is unknown whether Maxine allowed the use of languages other than English in her classroom.

At the end of the semester, Michaela received Maxine’s evaluation. Michaela was very surprised; she had told Maxine to contact her if there were any problems and she had not done so, despite her obvious concerns. Given that Harry had done well in the early experience, there was no reason to think he would not do so in the methods experience. She had also failed to share the evaluation with Harry, as she was asked to do. Michaela brought Harry’s case to Tim’s attention. Tim and Michaela were concerned about Harry’s lack of professionalism: failing to respond adequately to criticism, not taking the experience seriously, and even dressing below standard, based on what Maxine had said. When Tim asked Michaela why Maxine had not brought Harry’s case to their attention earlier, Michaela told him that Maxine had said, “I kept thinking [Harry] would change.”
Actions Taken During the Incident

Tim and Michaela were not sure what to do; although Harry had passed the field experience from a quantitative perspective, he had failed from a qualitative one. They were uncomfortable with his taking the final endorsement course, the practicum (40 hours of interaction and participation), the next semester. They took the case to their division head, who suggested that Harry do an additional 10 hours of methods experience in a local high school to prove himself ready for the practicum. Tim and Michaela liked the idea for two reasons. First, they did not want Harry to take the practicum without being sure that he was capable of passing it, and, second, they considered the possibility that the relatively poor evaluation was not entirely Harry’s fault; perhaps he and his cooperating teacher were just a bad fit. Such things had happened before. The situation was explained to the ESL coordinator at the high school, and she agreed to place Harry with someone who would be a good mentor: experienced and demanding, but fair.

Tim and Michaela met with Harry and told him about the (relatively) poor evaluation. Harry was upset; he thought the cooperating teacher had been unfair to him and gave his side of the story. He said that he had tried to do what she had asked of him but that she had not understood him. Even so, he agreed to do the additional hours so that he could finish the program. His new cooperating teacher found his performance more than satisfactory, Michaela adjusted the field experience grade, and Harry passed the course. He finished the program the following semester.

EVALUATION AND IMPLICATIONS

As we three authors look at Harry’s case, we come up with several actions that TESOL program administrators and instructors like Tim and Michaela might take to keep it from recurring.

Resolve Issues Related to the Supervision of Candidates in the Field

Harry’s case did not come to Tim’s or Michaela’s attention until the end of the semester because Michaela was responsible for the supervision of every candidate that semester—30 in all—and had to be selective about which ones she observed. She was responsible for so many candidates because the instructor of the other section of TESOL methods was a practicing P-12 teacher who could not leave her classroom to observe candidates. This instructor was hired because the course had gone over the cap at the last moment, and she was the only adjunct available to teach the extra section. In the future, Tim realizes, it would be wise to have a cadre of adjuncts for courses with field experiences who have daytime availability (e.g., retired teachers). This step would prevent cases like Harry’s from happening again due to a lack of proper university supervision. Although it might be tempting for programs to forego supervision of candidates who possess a teaching
license and/or teaching experience (and Tim knows of at least one program in his area that does), they should resist this temptation, lest they end up with a case like Harry’s.

Harry’s case raises issues related to supervision of candidates in teacher education generally and TESOL specifically. All three authors report tensions at their institutions between administrators who expect full-time faculty to supervise candidates in courses with a field component and faculty who see it as uncompensated work. Even with only 15 candidates in her section of TESOL methods, for example, Michaela thought it an extra burden to observe them in the field as well as teach them in the university classroom. Administration and faculty must find a way to resolve this tension. One possibility is the use of technology. Candidates might videotape themselves teaching a lesson in the methods course and discuss it with the instructor. With the candidate’s permission, the video might be shared with the entire class. This practice would have the additional benefit of preparing candidates for initial licensure in TESOL to complete the edTPA evaluation, which requires them to submit two video segments of their teaching.

Align Quantitative and Qualitative Aspects of Field Evaluation

Harry’s case presents an excellent example of how evaluations with both quantitative and qualitative components can be problematic. Although the scores on Harry’s evaluation indicated his performance was more than satisfactory, the comments did not, especially for someone going into the capstone course for TESOL endorsement. Teacher educators must decide how they will measure success—through quantitative evaluation, qualitative evaluation, or both—before they settle on an evaluation instrument, and they must decide how they will balance the components if they differ. Otherwise, candidates like Harry will be caught in the middle.

Arrange Observation and Debriefing Sessions by the University Field Supervisor

Harry’s case did not come to Tim’s attention until the end of the semester because Michaela was so busy supervising initial licensure candidates that she never saw Harry or communicated with his cooperating teacher until she received his final evaluation. As a result, Tim and Michaela were unaware of Harry’s performance until the very end of the semester. Had Michaela communicated with Maxine before the end of the semester, even by telephone partway through Harry’s placement, she would have been aware of Maxine’s concerns and could have addressed them with Harry. To avoid cases like Harry’s from recurring, teacher education programs must ensure that a university supervisor visits each methods field site at least once, not waiting until the end, and then allow for a debriefing session with the candidate to address the issues that may have arisen.
Establish Open Lines of Communication with Cooperating Teachers

An early observation and debriefing session, in combination with open, on-going communication with cooperating teachers, is important. Knowing the teaching context and any concerns raised by the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor can address them with candidates, and the candidates can be given the opportunity to respond in a thoughtful, carefully designed feedback session. The university supervisor should visit each methods field site at least once before the end of the semester and establish open lines of communication with each cooperating teacher. Supervising and cooperating teachers should communicate with each other, by telephone or e-mail, on a regular basis about the candidate’s performance. That should prevent Harry-type surprises from happening.

Inform Candidates of Expectations for Professionalism Before the Field Experience

Teacher education programs must emphasize professionalism—taking field experiences seriously, responding to criticism fully, and dressing appropriately, for example—when preparing candidates to go into the field. Candidates need to know that how they act is as important as what they teach. Information sessions held before the field experience starts can prevent many problems, and feedback sessions held before the field experience ends will lay the groundwork for what is expected of endorsement candidates before they enter the practicum (and licensure candidates before they enter student teaching). After methods-type field experiences have begun, supervisors should address areas of concern with teacher candidates; questions to ask include “What have you done to maximize your potential in this learning environment?” and “What can you do to alleviate or address the concerns of the cooperating teacher?” Feedback sessions, held preferably as soon as conflicts arise, can be used to develop internal responsibility (Schuck et al., 2008) within the candidate for their learning experiences.

Teacher educators must increasingly consider the role of “soft skills” (Robles, 2012) in both the preparation and evaluation of candidates. For instance, attitude is defined by Aiken (2000) as a “learned predisposition to respond positively or negatively to a specific object, situation, institution, or person” (p. 248). Applying Aiken’s definition to Harry, it can be inferred that his attitude and behavior (e.g., seeing stages as “hoops to jump through,” his belief that his cooperating teacher had not understood him, and his failure to take her criticism into account for his lesson planning) played a part in his relatively poor evaluation—at least from a qualitative perspective.

Teacher educators must also be on the lookout for signs of resistance or conflict in teacher candidates. The necessary first suggestion is to find out the source of the resistance or conflict, if any, by observing the interactions between the teacher candidate and his cooperating teacher. The concerns expressed by Harry’s cooperating teacher indicated some conflict or resistance within him that kept him from fulfilling her expectations, such as incorporating her feedback and criticism into his lessons and dressing at or above the
standards set by the school. Could Harry’s behaviors have been caused by a resistance he harbored that could have been explored and addressed during observation and debriefing sessions?

We have to wonder whether the truth lies somewhere in the perspectives related by the cooperating teacher, the candidate, the university supervisor, or in the middle of all three. By including Harry’s own perception in the analysis, we can also consider other filters that may have affected each one’s “truth.” For example, what were the cooperating teacher’s views of using a language other than English as an instructional tool? How could quantitative evaluations and qualitative comments provide such a different assessment of the same candidate? While we can consider issues of race, class, gender, and contextual power in this and many cases alike, how discriminating were any of these factors in that they altered the behaviors of either person?

Have Policies in Place to Deal with Unsuccessful or Problematic Field Experiences

For the most part, teacher candidates enter field experiences prepared to contribute to the learning environment and, in the process, become better teachers themselves. Sometimes they fail, however, and it is not all their fault. (Harry, for example, received high marks in his final practicum experience.) TESOL program administrators must be prepared to intervene to ensure that both the candidate and the cooperating teacher (and his/her students) have a positive learning experience.

CONCLUSION

Professional dispositions are critical for ESOL teacher education today, and this study has a number of implications for the field. First, professional dispositions must be defined and described so that teacher educators know what they must teach and how. States can take the lead in creating an educator code of ethics and design instruments that measure professional dispositions.

With a clear definition of professional dispositions and a valid, reliable instrument to measure them, teacher educators must assess candidates’ professional dispositions throughout their programs, ideally in all courses and field experiences but at least at the points indicated below. In their course work, teacher educators should include classroom activities that address professional dispositions. They might, for example, discuss the ethics code in detail and have teacher candidates write a reflective paper about the document. All field experiences should include assessments of candidates’ dispositions. More formally, professional dispositions should be addressed at three levels in the program:

*Level 1*: Required in the Introductory Education Course: a self-assessment, discussed in class and followed by a reflective paper/activity
Level 2: Required for Admission to Teacher Education: an assessment of the candidate by two evaluators (a program course instructor and a cooperating teacher/mentor from outside of school, recommended by the teacher candidate)

Level 3: Required for Exiting Student Teaching: an assessment of the candidate by two evaluators, the student teaching supervisor and the cooperating teacher/mentor

To address the deficiencies in these dispositions, corrective actions must be developed and taken at each stage.

The examples above demonstrate a possibility in using specific course activities as part of an overall professional dispositional assessment. In a formative-design experiment in different classes, teacher educators can conduct research within a single and specific setting intended to address the pedagogical goals (Richards, 2011) and examine the intervention’s purpose and efficacy. There is variability in how professional dispositions are assessed. Teacher education programs may utilize a combination of class-specific assessments or a single assessment tied to field experiences, or a broader instrument as a way to assess professional dispositions.

In conclusion, Rike and Sharp (2008, as cited in Almerico, Henriott, & Shapiro, 2011) states the following purposes for including disposition assessments in teacher education programs:

- Faculty need a way to clearly communicate to teacher candidates the expectations for their dispositions and the means of assessment;
- Identifying and measuring dispositions is a professional obligation in pre-service teacher education;
- Creating and using a research-based document to measure dispositions ensures consistency and limits subjectivity on the part of the evaluator; and
- Pre-service teachers need to be aware that who they are and what they believe will have a long-term effect on their careers and the students they teach.

The authors of this paper acknowledge the difficulty of assessing professionalism in candidates, yet also recognize the great potential for utilizing professionalism assessments as a strategy to help teacher candidates advance in the profession.

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