The logics of "effective" teaching: investigating the relationship between teacher education program missions and observational protocols and practices

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Over the last several decades, research on teacher observations has emerged as a central focus of research on teacher education. Teacher education programs have leveraged observation protocols in order to operationalize their conceptions of "effective teaching" in their preparation of teacher candidates. However, in the US context, "effective teaching" is a highly-contested topic, shaped by the complex policy environment of teacher education. The field has yet to explore the ways in which teacher education programs' use of observation protocols are shaped by these conceptions of "effective teaching" and may come to shape the ways teacher candidates understand and enact "effective teaching." To investigate these questions, this multiple-case study of three teacher education programs in the US investigates: (1) How do teacher candidates, teacher educators, and program leaders in each of the studied programs conceptualize "effective teaching"?, and (2) To what extent are these conceptions reflected in and/or shaped by the teacher observation protocols and practices employed in each of the studied programs? To examine how these logics shape the observation protocols and practices of programs, I draw on institutional theory on "institutional logics" to investigate how the broader US teacher education reform agendas shape the ways in which different teacher education programs conceptualize "effective teaching" and operationalize those conceptualizations through their observation protocols and practices. The emerging findings suggest each of the three programs use vastly distinct observational protocols with their teacher candidates, which reflect differing logics of "effective teaching." This paper contributes a novel perspective on how to consider the relationship between programs' conceptions of "teaching quality" and their