Teaching Teachers in the 21st Century: A Case Study

by

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Introduction

There is a growing national movement to reform teacher education in order to improve student performance and close the achievement gap. This movement is based on the belief that teachers are the key ingredients for successful education, and that we can improve our teachers by improving their preparation. The most apparent evidence of this belief is President Obama himself, who has said that, “From the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents, it’s the person standing in front of the classroom” (Stevens and Piazza 2010:513). The recent and widely publicized documentary, “Waiting for Superman”, makes the same central argument for the importance of teacher quality. The movement, and seemingly the nation as a whole, has decided that teachers are the key to improving our education system.

The current reform is taking new approaches to teacher education, including offering teacher preparation simultaneously with the responsibility of teaching a classroom. Political support for this innovative strategy can be seen through the recent federal grant awarded to the popular\(^1\) program, Teach for America, whose approach is modeled on simultaneous teaching and teacher preparation. Teach for America was recently awarded $50 million from the i3 grant\(^2\) for innovation, showing federal commitment to new models of teacher education (Dillon 2010). The federal government,

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1. By popular I mean that Teach For America has received much public support, politically and in the media, and has become a widely accepted option for recent graduates of elite colleges.
2. The i3 grant was set up during the 2009 economic stimulus to encourage innovation in education by nonprofits and school districts alike. Smaller awards were also given out, but only Teach for America, the KIPP foundation, Ohio State University, and The Success For All Foundation were awarded grants of roughly $50 million.
and perhaps the general public as well, have decided that teacher education is important and is going to undergo drastic changes. For this reason the study of new models of teacher education has become increasingly significant.

This paper focuses on one example of innovative teacher education, Teacher U. Teacher U was founded by the leaders of a number of successful education non-profits in partnership with Hunter College in New York City. The program reflects the popular conception of teachers, that they are young superheroes preparing to solve the education crisis. Their first 100 students started taking classes in 2008 as the initial step towards the school’s long-term vision:

Teacher U will bring about transformational change in teacher preparation and will become a place where a new generation of continuously-improving, results-focused individuals will fulfill their fate in the world’s greatest profession. By doing so, we aim to be instrumental in the urgent drive to close the achievement gap in urban communities. We do so not in isolation, but as a part of an education reform movement shaped by Uncommon Schools, KIPP, Achievement First, and Teach For America”(teacheru.org).

My research question is whether Teacher U is distinct from traditional graduate schools of education, how it is different, and what are the consequences of these differences?

Models of Teacher Education

This case study will be framed within the context of differing models of teacher education. The first of these debates is between a banking theory and constructivist theory of education, which differ on the role of the teacher and our conception of knowledge. The second is the style of teacher education, whether it should be based on educational theory or teaching techniques. Third, there are brief and extensive models of teacher education that differ greatly in length.
One of the key axes along which teacher education has shifted back and forth is the debate between the constructivist and banking model of teaching, which are at odds in terms of both content and process. The banking style of teaching is what most people think of as traditional teaching in that it is teacher centered and focused on objective content. Paulo Freire, one of the major theorists writing on the banking model, defines it as a unilateral transmission of objective knowledge that is inherently oppressive to the student. Freire writes that under the banking concept of education, “education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor…the teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects” (1970:58). This is the process by which knowledge is transmitted under this model. The model also assumes a certain set of common objective knowledge that all students should master. It is this objective knowledge that teachers are charged with transmitting to their students. The belief in objective knowledge is most commonly manifested in the back to basics movement, which has been present in the United States since 1983 when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published “A Nation At Risk”. The report called for a reenergized return to the traditional school subjects nationwide in order to survive in an increasingly competitive global economy (Gardner et al. 1983). The banking model of education calls for authoritative teachers with deep subject knowledge and the ability to transmit that knowledge effectively to the students.

Gordon (2008) and Kaufman and Grennon (1996) define constructivism through a synthesis of some of the most prominent scholars of education theory: Piaget, Vygotsky, Freire, von Glaserfeld, and Sigel and Cocking. The constructivist style of teaching is
based on the belief that knowledge does not exist a priori, but is constructed by humans. The constructed nature of knowledge devalues learning facts and instead prioritizes concepts and modes of thinking. Context is extremely important because knowledge is valuable only when there is adequate context within which the learning can be applied. The learning process in a constructivist style is not a simple transmission of knowledge, but a problem posing investigation. The teacher and student learn together and from one another, so the authority of the classroom is not with the teacher, but with the learning. Students are much more central to the learning process, and teachers are asked to be cultivators of minds, as opposed to authoritative depositors of information (Gordon 324-327, Kaufman 234-235).

Another ideological divide in teacher education is theory versus technique driven education. Theory driven teacher education exposes teachers to the theories and great thinkers of education in order to develop their understanding of teaching and education. The intuition is that this type of teacher education will create critical thinking teachers who will be able to apply these theories to their own teaching. Dewey argues for the value of theory in education because if educational plans lack theory, “they are at the mercy of every intellectual breeze that happens to blow” (1938:51). Conversely, technique driven teacher education explicitly teaches techniques of teaching. This provides teachers with a specific set of tools to use as they begin teaching. The motivation is that “great teaching is an art… great art relies on the mastery and application of foundational skills, learned individually through diligent study” (Lemov 2010:1).

Technique driven education is in ideological agreement with the banking model of education. Technique driven teacher education is conducive to the transmission of
objective content knowledge because it provides the teacher with a set of tools with which to fill their students with such knowledge. Technique driven teacher education implies that the power and responsibility of classroom learning is concentrated in the teacher, which is in line with the banking model. Alternatively, theory driven teacher education is generally ideologically aligned with a constructivist approach because it creates a critical thinking teacher who has the ability to conceptualize knowledge as a human construction and create a nuanced classroom environment of dynamic learning. As Dewey argues, theory is necessary for an evolving pedagogy, which is helpful for a constructivist approach that incorporates an ever-changing student experience.

A final debate in education policy concerns the intensity of teacher training. There is an argument for extensive teacher training in order to create a teacher workforce that is highly skilled and respected in society. The extensive training model is based on the assumption that teaching is a deeply complex and skilled profession that requires time and expert preparation. Finland ascribes to this model, providing three years of graduate level teacher preparation free of charge and including a living stipend. The program is also competitive, accepting only fifteen percent of applicants from a pool of college graduates. Linda Darling-Hammond argues that such an extensive model of teacher education is important to professionalize the teaching profession and adequately prepare teachers for their great responsibilities (2010:171, 193).

Alternatively, there is an argument for a much less extensive teacher training that is coupled with standardized testing, which provides accountability and incentives for performance. The brief teacher training model with testing and incentives assumes that quality teaching is within our grasp and only needs free market competition to encourage
effective teaching. Most teacher training programs in the United States are shorter than the Finland model, and some states even grant emergency certification while teachers work toward their official certification in order to increase the number of teachers.

One example of the brief training model is Teach for America, which has the basic characteristics of the brief training model with one major difference. Founded by Wendy Kopp, Teach For America recruits bright college students and provides five weeks of training before the first day of teaching. Darling-Hammond wrote of Kopp, “she was sure she could do in a few weeks whatever it was that universities took much longer to do”(1994:23). The common assumption between Teach for America and the brief training model is that traditional teacher preparation programs are ineffective, and can be replaced by a brief teacher training and some alternative mechanism to ensure teacher quality. However, Teach for America is distinct from the brief training model in that its participants are selected to be extremely talented and driven, and do not generally teach for more than a few years on average. Therefore the mechanism they use to ensure teacher quality is the selection of talented and driven teachers, while the brief training model depends on standardized testing for accountability and incentives to promote teacher quality. Teacher education revolves around the debates over these models: brief versus extensive, technique versus theory, and banking versus constructivist.

**Contemporary Teacher Education Literature**

With these three debates in teacher education in mind, I will investigate the landscape of teacher education. Cochran-Smith (2005), in her presidential address to the American Educational Research Association, presents the recent shift in teacher
education, which she calls “The New Teacher Education”. Influenced by the achievement gap, the large role of the federal government in education, and a free market approach to education policy, The New Teacher Education has three key features. First, it is constructed as a policy problem in that teacher education is analyzed in order to improve certain components through policy. Second, teacher education is becoming more dependent on research and evidence in order to illuminate the mysterious “black box”\(^3\) of teacher quality. Finally, teacher education is increasingly driven by outcomes, instead of inputs. Prior to the middle of the 1990’s the emphasis was on the process of how teachers learned to teach, whereas now the emphasis is on student achievement.

Beyond these three main principles, there are a few other important characteristics of The New Teacher Education. It assumes that teachers are the most important factor in the quest to improve student achievement. It assumes that subject knowledge is more important than pedagogy in order to be a good teacher, which Cochran-Smith places within the history of anti-educationism and a devaluation of teaching. Finally, the new movement supports the deregulation of the teaching profession, so that alternative routes to certification are available.

The New Teacher Education can be placed within these debates in teacher education: constructivist versus banking, theory versus technique, and extensive versus brief training. The New Teacher Education views teacher education as a policy problem with the goal of increased output in terms of standardized testing, and prioritizes subject knowledge over pedagogy as the key to quality teaching. These characteristics are

\(^3\) The black box refers to the idea that researches can identify the importance of teacher quality, but cannot determine what makes up teacher quality. There is much debate over what the black box of teacher quality contains.
aligned with the banking and technique models in the common emphasis of objective content and outputs as opposed to a constructivist education that emphasizes the process of learning and concepts over facts. The New Teacher Education also assumes that the teacher is the most important element for student achievement, which supports the teacher centered classroom in the banking and technique driven models. Finally, The New Teacher Education supports deregulation of the teaching profession, which makes space for a brief teacher training model. This is not to say that The New Teacher Education favors the brief teacher training model, but that it allows for its existence if it produces better results. The New Teacher Education and the brief teacher training model both use standardized testing, but the former does not necessarily lead to the latter.

There are some elements of the New Teacher Education that do not fit perfectly along these axes. For example, there is a heightened role for federal policy and research, which does not fall into any of the three highlighted debates in teacher education. However, the emphases on objective content, output, deregulation, and the paramount importance of teachers make The New Teacher Education ideologically aligned with a banking, technique driven teacher education. This is in opposition to a constructivist, theory driven teacher education.

David Steiner, former Dean of the Hunter School of Education and current New York State Commissioner of Education, wrote a representative and influential critique of traditional graduate schools of education worth consideration. Steiner (2004) attempts an analysis of the pedagogy of graduate schools of education to see what was lacking according to his criteria of quality teacher education. He conducts an analysis of syllabi from sixteen prestigious graduate education programs in the United States to see what
was taught in their courses on educational foundations, reading, and general methods. He finds that teacher education took an overly constructivist approach that lacked practicality. He argues that the curriculum is biased and failed to present oppositional views, such as support for back to basics, test scores, phonics, and universally valuable knowledge. He concludes that he is “not convinced that elite education schools are doing an adequate job of conveying fundamental, broad-based knowledge and skills to prospective teachers” (142). He argues that teacher education in the US has swung back and forth between a constructivist and back to basics approach, and that the battle has resulted in mediocre teacher training.

Steiner advocates for data driven policy and teacher education that emphasizes practicality and direct instruction. He writes, “A student of the violin reaches for disciplined technique; a mature violinist subsumes that discipline into art. So it should be with teaching” (143). He argues that technique driven teacher education often works better than traditional teacher education in underprivileged districts, and advocates for this model in order to raise the performance of disadvantaged children.

Steiner’s paper flushes out some of the key critiques of traditional graduate schools of education. His concluding argument is that there is a disconnect between the constructivist ideology taught to teachers and the performance based assessment upon which they are evaluated. Steiner argues that a constructivist approach that is critical of standardized testing is incompatible with the realities of current performance evaluation, and that a technique driven education with an authoritative teacher role and objective content knowledge would be more effective in raising student achievement.
Cochran-Smith and Steiner lay out two examples of contemporary critiques of teacher education. These critiques have led directly to policy changes in teacher education that have tended to fall towards one side of the three previously mentioned debates. The recent political shift has resulted in The New Teacher Education, which has favored a banking over constructivist model of education, technique over theory, and has allowed space for brief teacher training. The movement of policy in this direction makes Teacher U crucial to our understanding of the changing state of teacher education.

**Case Study: Teacher U**

The New Teacher Education can be read as an attack on the traditional system of graduate level education. The New Teacher Education supports deregulation of teacher education so that universities do not have a monopoly on certification. It emphasizes the involvement of federal policy and research in order to find what makes quality teaching. The movement’s supporters argue that universities do not adequately prepare teachers, and have tried to wrestle control of the profession out of higher education. Teacher U is closely affiliated with organizations that ascribe to many of the principles of The New Teacher Education, from which I infer a potential ideological overlap. However, unlike these affiliated organizations, Teacher U is a formal institution of higher education.

For this reason, Teacher U is an intriguing case study to examine the tensions and changes brought forth by The New Teacher Education. Teacher U is simultaneously associated with a movement that attacks higher education and it is part of higher education itself. Teacher U poses a threat to institutions of higher education because it represents an alternative model. As a young member of the system of higher education,
Teacher U may show that this new model prepares teachers to be more effective with less extensive training. In other words, Teacher U may represent an alternative that does what traditional institutions of higher education do, only better and faster. 4

David Steiner, the author of the previously mentioned paper, served as the Dean of the Hunter College School of Education from 2005 until 2009. Teacher U was founded in collaboration with the Hunter School of Education, and during his time there Steiner was a major contributor to the founding of Teacher U. In 2009 he was appointed New York State Education Commissioner, and is not currently associated with Teacher U (Green 2009). However, his criticisms of traditional graduate schools of education are a indicator of where Teacher U stands in the spectrum of teacher education. Steiner’s critique of traditional teacher education and his involvement with Teacher U suggest that Teacher U may well have been founded in opposition to traditional graduate schools of

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4 Another hint that Teacher U was an important and potentially controversial organization to investigate came in the interview process. Using the contact list of a friend enrolled in the program, I emailed a number of instructors there to see if I could interview them and observe their classes. Soon after, the Chief Operating Office of Teacher U contacted me. Over the phone, he asked me a long list of questions to begin our conversation, one after the other: where I am from, what inspired my research, what I knew about Teacher U, how I had been researching them, how long would my final paper be, what my intentions were, whether it would be published. He said that I had caused quite a disturbance and a lot of extra work for him, and seemed genuinely upset that I had gotten in touch with Teacher U instructors through informal channels. He said that Teacher U was very calculating in what outsiders can see and hear from Teacher U, and that Teacher U did not want public attention at that time. Finally he set me up to interview the Director of Teaching and Learning, said that I was not to use a tape recorder, and I should not interview anyone else at Teacher U. When I arrived at Teacher U and said that I was visiting, the woman at the front desk already knew my name and gave me a visitors tag to wear around my neck. There were signs on the doors restricting access to only those who were students, instructors, or had visitors passes. At the first lecture, the first announcement was that students should request permission from Teacher U administration if they would like to bring visitors. The entire experience, from the tone of the Chief Operating Officer to the label hanging from my neck, made me feel that they were suspicious of my research and wanted to carefully control my visit.
education in emphasizing a banking model of education and more technique driven instruction.

Another major influence on Teacher U is the ideology of Uncommon Schools, one of the primary organizations associated with the creation of Teacher U. The two institutions are so closely linked that they have the same founder; Norman Atkins founded Teacher U and is also the founder of Uncommon Schools. The current managing director of Uncommon Schools is Doug Lemov, who published a book in 2010 titled “Teach Like a Champion”. The research that fueled the book began when Lemov ran a regression of the level of poverty of schools against school achievement, and looked at results by grade and subject. When he found a school that did particularly well in a particular grade and subject relative to what their poverty level would have predicted, he visited the teachers there. He videotaped classes and condensed his observations into 49 techniques that great teachers use, which are now referred to as Lemov’s Taxonomy (Lemov 2010).

The book has gained popularity, and was the subject of a front-page article in the New York Times Magazine in March of 2010 titled, “Building a Better Teacher”. It is essentially a textbook for technique driven teacher education, and includes within it a critique of traditional teacher education. In the introduction, Lemov writes “many of the tools likely to yield the strongest classroom results remain essentially beneath the notices of our theories and theorists of education… There isn’t a school of education in the country that would stoop to teach its aspiring teachers how to train their students to pass out papers, even though it is one of the most valuable things they could possibly
do”(2010:8). Lemov’s ideology represents technique driven education in direct opposition to the teacher education provided in higher education.

“Teach Like a Champion” is strongly linked to the major founding organizations of Teacher U. It is on the Uncommon Schools website in their “About Us” section, and founder Norman Atkins wrote the foreword of the book. The back cover of the book includes overwhelming praise from Dave Levin, co-founder of KIPP, Dacia Toll, co-chief executive officer of Achievement First, and Wendy Kopp, Chief Executive Officer of Teach For America. The connection between the taxonomy of teacher education techniques and Teacher U suggests that Teacher U ascribes to a technique driven teacher education that is distinct from traditional graduate schools of education.

**Methods**

The work of Cochran-Smith, Steiner, and Lemov suggest that Teacher U is distinct from traditional graduate schools of education in its emphasis on technique and a banking model of education. This literature informs my research question and methodology. To investigate if and how Teacher U differs from traditional graduate schools of education, I needed to find a control group to compare with Teacher U. Teacher U is a masters of education program designed for novice teachers in elementary and middle schools, and does not offer an undergraduate school of education. In Connecticut, there are four schools that have masters programs for elementary education and do not have undergraduate schools of education. These schools are Quinnipiac University, University of New Haven, University of Bridgeport, and Fairfield University. In 2009, Fairfield prepared only 19 graduates to teach elementary school, while
Quinnipiac, New Haven, and Bridgeport prepared 113, 103, and 205, respectively (Connecticut State Department of Education 2011). Teacher U prepares about 100 elementary teachers in each cohort, so I use Quinnipiac, New Haven, and Bridgeport as a comparison group because they are most comparable in terms of scale.

My research question asks if and how Teacher U differs from other graduate schools of education, which I will answer by evaluating the programs along the previously mentioned models of teacher education: banking versus constructivist, technique versus theory, and brief versus extensive. In order to investigate how these schools fit into these models, I looked at classes at each school on two of the basic fields of teacher education: the foundations of education and classroom management. I contacted professors of these classes on the basis of availability, ensuring that I had at least one professor at each university who would be willing to work with me. My research at each university included three parts. First, I set up interviews with the professors. To learn where the program fell along the lines of constructivism versus banking, I asked questions about how the program teaches pedagogy and classroom management, what the goal of education is, what the role of the teacher is in education, and whether standardized testing is an accurate tool of assessment. As a proxy for technique driven education I used “Teach Like a Champion” by Doug Lemov. I asked if they were familiar with the book and explained its premise. I provided a list of the techniques from the book and asked if their program implicitly or explicitly taught any of the techniques. I asked if the program agreed with the ideology of the book in the realms of classroom management and pedagogy, and finally what they thought of technique versus theory driven teacher education. For all of the questions, I emphasized that the
interviewee should respond for him or herself and also for the program as a whole, distinguishing between the two answers. For example, if the professor responded with a certain ideology about the goal of education, I followed up with a clarification of whether their education program as a whole ascribed to that same ideology.

After the interview, I observed a class that the professor taught. I sat with the students but in the back of the room, where I was introduced as a visitor doing research on teacher education. I took notes on the content taught in the class, the ways in which the content was transmitted, and the ways students participated and related to the teacher. Finally, I collected materials from the course and the program in general, including syllabi, worksheets, and major assignments.

The scope of this research is limited. I asked each professor to attempt to speak for their university’s program as best they could, but even so the sample size is too small to draw conclusions about every professor in each institution. Instead the results of the research should be interpreted as an indicator of each program. Additionally, the three control universities selected cannot be assumed to represent all traditional graduate schools of education nationwide. Nevertheless, this case study of Teacher U will lend insight into contemporary changes in teacher education. Teacher U is young and unexamined, and this work attempts to explore the program as a stepping stone towards further investigation of innovation and reform in teacher education.

Overview of Schools

The elementary masters of education program at Quinnipiac has about 30 elementary students in each cohort and costs roughly $18,000 for the entire program after
discounts from optional internships\textsuperscript{5}. The program is five semesters long, which full time students generally complete over two years including a summer in between. The school is located in North Haven, Connecticut, in a large, recently renovated building overlooking a pond with large fountains. Classes meet during the week after students finish their daily internships in schools. The class I visited had about twenty students, all phenotypically white, over three-fourths women, sitting in three rows of finished wood tables facing the professor and white board, located in a room with large glass windows.

The professor from the Quinnipiac program said that their goal of education was to help students become curious, self aware, lifelong learners and responsible citizens. The role of the teacher in education, according to Quinnipiac, is less a transmitter of information and more of a facilitator of learning. The teacher should be very present in the classroom, contagiously enthusiastic about subject matter and passionate about teaching. The program sends a clear message that there is not one way to be a good teacher, that a given style of teaching must ring true with the teacher in order for it to be successful, and backs this up by teaching multiple styles of teaching.

The New Haven program has roughly 200 students studying to be elementary teachers in each cohort, and the vast majority go through the internship program. They spend a year in an elementary school as teacher aids, substitute teachers, and administrative assistants and in return their tuition is free. The program takes a year, in

\textsuperscript{5} Students and costs are estimates because they vary yearly. Costs vary widely based on internship participation, so I calculated cost based on the most common route. Information came from phone calls to the office of admissions at each program. Discrepancies between the 2009 elementary graduates of each university and the average cohort come from the timing of the graduating classes. Students take many different routes to graduation, so that there may be 30 students in an average cohort, but in a given year 100 students may graduate.
which they are at their internships during the day and at classes at night, and ends up costing students roughly $4,500. The school offers classes at a number of locations, including at Mitchell College in New London, where I observed. Right on the harbor, the campus is small and unglamorous; the office in which I interviewed the professor was wedged behind another office up three flights of stairs. The classroom was simple and barren, where we sat in a circle at individual desks and ate takeout pizza and soda. There were eight students, all but one of which were women, and all of which were phenotypically white.

The professor I interviewed was male, phenotypically white, and taught classes in classroom management, assessment, and contemporary issues. He informed me that the ideal goal of education was being debated within the program, but that he believes it is to provide a liberal arts education in order to develop robust, thinking individuals that will help the country survive in a global economy. The program’s ideal teacher is someone who is knowledgeable of content and pedagogy, but most importantly passionate. The program also advocates for no universal style of good teaching, instead providing their future teachers with “arrows to fill their quivers”, giving them skills so that they can be successful in any circumstance.

The elementary program at Bridgeport has 100 students in each cohort and the full program costs roughly $4,000 for education interns, which is the most common route. The internship is ten months long and is located at a school near the students’ homes for convenience, where they work as short term substitute teachers, run tutorials, and perform administrative duties. They are at these internships each day and take classes at night, completing their degree in ten months. Unfortunately I was not able to observe
classes at Bridgeport, so I cannot accurately report on the appearance of the campus, the classrooms or students.

The professor I interviewed was female and taught classes on linguistics and seminars on internship field experiences. I was unable to observe the phenotypical race of the professor because the interview was conducted over the phone and a picture is not available on the university’s website. The professor, speaking for herself and the university, said that teaching is a nursing profession, in which the goal of education is to help kids reach their goals in life and survive the difficult public school system. The characteristics of the ideal teacher vary by discipline, but they all need to know content well, take a somewhat constructivist approach to teaching, and be inspiring. However, there is no one size fits all way of teaching, according to the professor and program. Instead, the program strives to provide the future teachers with a toolbox and allow them to experiment and observe in their internships to see what works.

Teacher U has about 100 students preparing to be elementary teachers in each cohort, and costs about $13,000 for the entire program. The program is two years long, but students receive a temporary certification and begin teaching after completing five weeks of summer classes, and continue teaching throughout the two years. Classes meet once a month on Saturdays at Hunter College in New York City, and include a second session of five weeks in the intermediate summer. The building is simple, brick, and plain, and the classes meet in the auditorium, cafeteria, and in small classrooms. Larger lectures have about one hundred students, while smaller afternoon classes on subject specific lessons have about fifteen. The reported student population demographics were
70% female, 30% male, and 59% white, 21% black or African-American, 12% Hispanic, and 6.5% Asian\textsuperscript{6}.

The professor I interviewed was female, phenotypically white, and was the Director of Teaching and Learning at Teacher U. According to her, Teacher U is built upon the belief that the goal of education is to develop in students the academic skills and strength of character needed to succeed in college and in life. The role of the teacher within this vision is to create a safe, supportive learning environment in order to develop in students these skills. The professor I interviewed told me that she hopes that Teacher U is not prescriptive because they believe that there is no one way to be a good teacher, and also used the toolbox analogy for preparing teachers. However, close investigation of their teacher preparation methods shows that this may have been a practiced interview response rather than a representation of what the program truly practices.

**Results and Analysis**

The most complex of the previously mentioned debates in teacher education is between the banking and constructivist models of education. The banking model of education is based on the transmission of objective knowledge from teacher to student, and an authoritative, teacher-centered classroom. The constructivist model of education is based on the belief that knowledge is not objective but constructed, and so the educational process should be problem posing, as a collaborative investigation by both

\textsuperscript{6} Andrea Sturtevant McDonough, email to author, January 18, 2011.
student and teacher. In order to evaluate where these graduate programs of teacher
education fall along these two models, I must determine what type of teaching they
prepare their future teachers to teach in terms of both the objectivity of knowledge and
the transmission of this knowledge.

The Quinnipiac program explicitly and emphatically promotes a constructivist
model, from which we can infer both a belief in the construction of knowledge and a
problem posing, teacher and student collaborative teaching style. This was supported in
both the interview and class observation, through the advocacy for and use of student
centered learning. The professor said, “We expose them to different pedagogical
approaches but advocate the constructivist approach, based on discussions and students
constructing own understandings of material rather than professor lecturing”. Based on
the interview, observation, and materials, I conclude that Quinnipiac falls squarely in the
constructivist model of education.

The New Haven model is less clear in terms of banking versus constructivist. The
reported goal of education for the professor at New Haven was to provide a liberal arts
education in order to develop “robust, thinking individuals that can then be used as a
springboard to survive in the global economy”. This is essentially Diane Ravitch’s
ideology, proposed in “The Death and Life of the Great American School System”,
which advocates for a back to basics movement in education (2010). This suggests that
the New Haven program accepts a back to basics ideology and the objective conception
of knowledge that back to basics is based upon. In terms of the transmission of that
knowledge, however, New Haven advocates for the use of both teacher techniques that
are useful for a teacher-centered classroom, as well as alternative forms of assessment
that are more student centered. Therefore I conclude that the New Haven program ascribes to the banking model of education in terms of the objectivity of knowledge, but in terms of transmission of that knowledge the program offers a balance between teacher and student centered processes of learning.

Based on the interview, the Bridgeport program ascribes to a constructivist ideology. The program’s reported goal of education was to help students reach their goals in life, whatever they may be, and never explicitly mentions mastery of content. The professor and program are critical of standardized testing, which is the primary mechanism for evaluating a defined set of content. The professor also explicitly mentioned constructing knowledge when speaking about the teachers they produce. From all this I can assume that the program does not believe in the objectivity of knowledge nor advocates a back to basics ideology, and while I cannot assume a problem posing model of learning, it seems more likely given the constructivist basis for the program. In terms of the role of the teacher, the Bridgeport program prepares teachers differently based on content discipline. The professor interviewed reported that, “constructivism is at the base of teacher preparation” for all disciplines, but that the focus in science and math is much more on the transmission of content than in languages and history. Therefore I conclude that the Bridgeport program prepares teachers for a mostly student centered learning process, but more teacher centered for science and math teachers. The program altogether ascribes to a moderate version of the constructivist model of education in both objectivity of content and learning process.

Teacher U is based on an objective conception of knowledge, which can be seen in a number of ways. The program prepares teachers to make the most efficient use of
their time in the classroom every day so that students can gain the most knowledge possible. They spend a lot of time and energy evaluating student performance on standardized tests, which assess a narrow and objective set of knowledge. These tests are so important that Teacher U teachers cannot graduate unless their students improve significantly on these tests. Teacher U prepares teachers to teach back to basics, which relies on objective knowledge. The instructor interviewed said that, “Some people make a false dichotomy between back to basics and free thinking. The truth is in the middle. You need to know both. Teacher U techniques are the foundation, back to basics opens the door to free thinking.” Although the instructor does not argue that back to basics is the only goal of education, the implication is that Teacher U techniques provide the back to basics foundation that students need. From the above I conclude that Teacher U wants their students to gain as much of a given set of knowledge as possible through a back to basics model of learning based on an objective conception of knowledge.

One potential counterexample to this conclusion was that one of the classes observed was about culturally relevant pedagogy and hegemonic knowledge, which suggests that knowledge at Teacher U is not considered completely objective. However, the goal of the class was not to have teachers help their students see knowledge as a human construction. Teachers were asked to take into account the issue of hegemonic knowledge, but this was for them to consider, rather than express to their students. Although hegemonic knowledge was discussed at Teacher U, constructing knowledge did not seem to be part of the desired teaching style. Based on the emphasis on back to basics and standardized testing, it appears that Teacher U teachers are for the most part prepared

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7 At Teacher U, the equivalent to a professor of education is called an instructor.
for a teaching style based on assumptions of objective knowledge, although they are at times asked to reexamine this for themselves.

Teacher U also ascribes strongly to an authoritative, teacher centered classroom. The techniques taught to the teachers are used so that they can wield complete control of their classrooms to maximize order and learning. The manner in which these techniques are taught and the example videos are strong evidence that the techniques are used in this way. At one point during a lecture and video on a technique called “100% Compliance”, a student questioned the use of the word “compliance” because it implied that the teacher was exhibiting power over her students. The criticism was that the program claimed to believe in “purpose, not power”, but that power was being used as a means to the end of learning in this case. The language of the lecture and the critical comment show that the techniques are used to make the teacher a more effective authority in the classroom. Another video showed the teacher using nonverbal signals, such as snapping, to keep students quiet while one student answered a question. A Teacher U student again criticized that the teacher was not paying attention to the responding student, and wasn’t giving value to what he was saying. Teacher U prepares teachers with a style in which student participation is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Teacher U ascribes to a banking model of education by preparing its teachers to be authoritative in teacher centered classrooms and for them to teach using a back to basics model based on objective knowledge.

In order to illustrate the differences between the constructivist and banking models of education, I would like to highlight classroom observations from the most extreme examples these models. At Quinnipiac, the professor modeled and promoted the
constructivist approach in the classroom by prioritizing student contribution. He asked the class of twenty students to reflect individually on a few questions about their own experiences, and then gave everyone a chance to share and discuss the responses. When there was a lull in conversation, he did not seem hurried to fill it by providing an answer or insight. While observing the class, I got the strong sense that students would learn only as much as they engaged with the material and learning process. The reading was explicitly about constructivism, and the professor repeatedly prompted the students to engage critically with the concepts. He asked them to express their own experiences with teachers, and what their own opinions were about different teaching styles. His role in the class seemed to be the cultivator of the soon-to-be teachers’ minds, pushing them to develop their teaching identities and philosophies. In the constructivist spirit, he posed the learning as a collaborative process rather than a transmission of knowledge, so that they could together construct an understanding of the material. He wanted to instill the value of student experience, and develop critical thinking teachers capable of engaging with educational theory.

To illustrate the banking model, I will describe the first class I observed at Teacher U. The class was in the auditorium with about 100 students, and was led by a guest lecturer who had a microphone and a Powerpoint presentation up on a projection screen. She modeled and promoted a banking style of education through her style and content. The students were given a fill-in-the-blanks packet to take organized notes in. There were pauses in the lecture for students to discuss briefly with a neighbor, and then one or two pairs shared with the group. If the sharers did not get to the point the instructor was making, she explained it herself and justified doing so in the interest of
time. When students disagreed with a part of the lecture, she said that it was a great point but that they did not have time to discuss it further. The questions for the students were much more about comprehension of the material than exploring or challenging it. For example, in response to the video the packet asked students “Why is Mr. Davis successful at getting his students to do what he asks them to do?” and “[What are] the most effective non-verbal interventions you want to adopt in your classroom or takeaways from this clip?”. The goal of the class was the clearly to pass the information of the lecture to the students as efficiently as possible, as opposed to the engagement of the students with the material. The pace of the class, the tone of the instructor, and the nature of the questions gave the sense that student participation was used primarily to keep student attention and check for basic comprehension. The material was on the techniques in Lemov’s book and the videos showed the techniques being used to keep students quiet and efficiently working. One video showed a teacher naming students who were not on task, for the technique called “100% Compliance”. The teacher would say, for example, “I’m waiting on Darrell, I have Sheila but I’m waiting on Tim”. He would do this until all of the students were doing the desired task at a satisfactory level. The content of the lecture, as well as the style it was given in, promoted an authoritative, teacher centered classroom. The lecture also demonstrated the transmission of an objective set of knowledge, in this case Lemov’s techniques.

There is also the debate between theory and technique driven teacher education, of whether to provide teachers with theory with which to examine education or techniques with which to apply to the practice of teaching. During the interview, the professor said that Quinnipiac students learn a lot of the techniques described in “Teach
Like A Champion”, and also learn a good deal of education theory. However, the professor expressed ambivalence about technique. “I’m just not sure [technique is] what makes the great teachers, doesn’t necessarily make them the great teacher. We do it but I’m not sure that’s what differentiates the excellent teacher from the mediocre… The excellent teacher is someone who is really present in the classroom and is there for their students or is enthusiastic about their subject matter in a way that is contagious”.

Quinnipiac teaches some technique, but it is not the main emphasis of the program.

According to the professor I spoke with, New Haven students learn some theory through the program as a complement to their internships, and learn some technique through observations in their internships. The program tries to do both theory and technique, and while the professor fell more heavily on the side of theory, others focused on technique. He said, “The more experience we can give the better off they’re going to be. There also needs to be a great deal of conversation, reflection. Its good to have frameworks to work from, psychology etc, but it needs to be connected to what they’re doing, there is no substitute for experience”. New Haven focuses on teacher experience through their internships, and complements that with both theory and technique.

The professor I spoke with at Bridgeport told me that students are taught theory as a direct complement to their internships, and are taught some pedagogical techniques through the program while absorbing classroom management techniques at their internships. When asked about the relative importance of theory and technique, the professor answered, “Both are necessary. It’s hard to hold a child with one arm”. The program believes that both theory and technique are important for preparing quality teachers and emphasizes that neither are taught in isolation.
Students at Teacher U do not seem to be explicitly taught any theory at all. There are opportunities for thinking about education in abstract ways, but I did not see any discussion or assigned readings that dealt with theory. The closest I saw to a theoretical discussion was a lecture on “Evaluating Your Classroom for Multicultural Curricula”, but even this was more focused on practical implementation than the implications of cultural sensitivity for education. Students instead are extensively and explicitly taught techniques to be used in their classrooms. The instructor I interviewed, the head of curriculum at Teacher U, said that they ascribe very closely to Lemov’s philosophy, and that they draw heavily from “Teach Like A Champion”. She said, “We try to break down teaching into concrete, observable moves. Our process is to observe, identify, practice, repeat.” The main lecture of my observation was on two highlighted techniques of Lemov’s, and the smaller workshops at the end of the day discussed variations on math games as tools for instruction. The focus of the learning was on improving the students as efficiently and practically as possible, and Teacher U uses technique driven teacher education to do this.

Finally there is the division in the field of teacher education between brief and extensive models. Quinnipiac is a five semester, full time program that is generally done over two years with a summer in between, and includes an internship during the day for the first two semesters. New Haven is one year long, full time with an internship during the day, followed by thirteen weeks of student teaching to complete certification. Bridgeport is thirteen months long, full time with an internship and a summer off after ten months. Teacher U students, unlike students in other programs, receive transitional accreditation as soon as they enroll and begin teaching immediately upon completing five weeks of summer classes. They take classes one Saturday each month, for eight hours a
day over the course of two years, and have a second summer session of five weeks after their first year teaching.

There is significant variation between Quinnipiac, New Haven and Bridgeport along the three discussed axes of teacher education; banking versus constructivist, theory versus technique, and brief versus extensive. Quinnipiac seems to fall strongly on the sides of constructivist, theory driven, and extensive teacher education relative to the other programs. New Haven ascribes to a banking model of education in terms of objectivity of knowledge, but takes a more balanced approach to the transmission of knowledge. The program takes a similarly balanced approach to theory versus technique, and is only slightly shorter than Quinnipiac. Bridgeport ascribes to a moderate version of constructivist teacher education as well as a balance between theory and technique, and is also slightly shorter than Quinnipiac.

Although there is variation between these three schools, Teacher U is at an extreme along all three axes relative to the other programs, making the others seem quite similar when viewed in contrast. Teacher U ascribes very closely to a banking model of education, a technique driven model of teacher education, and it is the shortest of the programs in terms of preparation before teaching and the total amount of time spent in the program’s classes. Therefore, the answers to the first and second parts of my research questions are that Teacher U is distinct from traditional graduate schools of education, and it is different in that it ascribes to a banking, technique driven, and brief model of teacher education. The final question to answer is what are the consequences of these differences?
Discussion

A teacher education model, such as Teacher U, that is teacher centered, based on objective knowledge, technique driven, and brief has enormous implications for our education system. There are many implications of the Teacher U model on its current scale, but to see the total potential impact, I want to imagine what our world would look like if the model were expanded to the country as a whole. In fact, this is very reasonable because Teacher U fits with the ideology of The New Teacher Education. Both advocate a banking, technique driven model, and The New Teacher Education makes space for a brief teacher training model as well. Teacher U seems to be a manifestation of The New Teacher Education within the context of higher education. As Cochran-Smith argues, The New Teacher Education is the current state of the field, and also where it is likely headed in the near future. Therefore I want to explore the effects of scaling up the Teacher U model to the national level.

Teacher U’s Hidden Curriculum

One way to examine these implications is through what Michael Apple calls the “hidden curriculum” (2004). There is a set of values implicit in the education system, in everything from the content taught to the way a class is organized. We generally think of schools as neutral institutions, but they are in fact political in that they reproduce elements of society, including inequality. This is not to say that some group of executives plots how to organize schooling in order to shape society as they wish, but rather that our society demands that education serve certain functions. For example, society currently needs a small group of elites with leadership skills, ingenuity, and a drive to succeed, so
schools socialize certain students for this role through selective classes and peer
competition. The idea of a hidden curriculum is useful for connecting characteristics of
educational models with their ramifications in society.

In the banking model that Teacher U ascribes to, the teacher centered power
dynamic devalues student experience and expression. The process of learning is strictly a
transmission of information from teacher to student, which Dewey would criticize for
excluding student experience because the student does not play an active role in the
learning process. The student has nothing to actively contribute to the learning process
because teacher knowledge and experience is valuable, and the student’s is not. As Freire
argues, a banking education makes the teacher the subject and students the objects, so
that the student is only a receptacle for information. Students’ conceptions of the world
based on their experiences are meaningless, and instead they must accept the teacher’s
authoritative version of reality. This is, as Freire argues, dehumanizing because it treats
students as passive, ignorant objects who eventually lose some sense of self-worth
(1970). Students in the banking model of education become passive, disinterested, and
mechanistic in their daily labor, and the engaged, intellectually curious students are no
more. Schools socialize the future members and leaders of society, so a banking model of
education could lead to an entire society of apathetic, narrow-minded workers.

An authoritative, teacher centered model also fails to cultivate creativity,
teamwork, or critical consciousness in students. The information transmission process
lacks the student engagement and autonomy necessary to cultivate student creativity, and
lacks the student collaboration necessary to develop the complex social skills for working
with peers. Students are excluded from an active part in the learning process, and instead
are forced to accept a dominant version of reality, which prevents them from developing a critical consciousness. Our society needs education to prepare critical thinking intellectuals for the responsibility of democracy and active citizenship, which Teacher U’s banking model of education fails to do.

One alternative to the banking model is seen through the concept of authentic achievement. This concept is based on certain criteria for student achievement: construction of original knowledge (as opposed to reproducing knowledge), in depth understanding, expressing ideas through elaborated communication, and the value of achievement beyond school. Students are asked to engage in creative problem solving for real world problems, and express themselves in a variety of ways. This more student centered approach promotes student creativity by pushing them to think outside the box, and develops cooperative skills by asking students to work together and communicate. Students also develop a critical consciousness through the production of original knowledge because they are asked to take an intellectual stance instead of regurgitating an accepted set of knowledge. In contrast to the Teacher U banking model, authentic achievement engages students in their academics and develops a sense of self-worth, which is supported by research showing that students in this model of education are more motivated to learn (Newmann et al. 1996: 21-28).

The brief and technique driven teacher preparation model, which Teacher U uses, implies that teaching is not a complex skill that requires extensive training but rather a simple skill that can be taught through a set of techniques. This is a devaluation of the teaching profession, and potentially of the education system as a whole. If teaching is treated as a simple skill it will attract potential teachers accordingly, leading to a less
talented workforce of teachers. Other than their parents, children spend the most time with their teachers, who are in charge of their intellectual and personal development. I would argue that this is an incredibly valuable position in society and should be treated as such so that children get the talented teachers they deserve.

Darling-Hammond argues strongly for the increased professionalization of teachers. She shows evidence that the nations with high achieving education systems invest in extensive teacher education, and continue to support their development once they start teaching. This generally includes three to four years of high quality teacher education, paid by the government, as well as providing experienced mentor teachers to help beginning teachers develop. These successful nations also pay their teachers competitive salaries in order to attract talented youth.

Darling-Hammond compares the teacher profession to the medical profession in the early 1900’s, in the similar range of length and quality of training, the result being that the service received was generally not close to the best quality available. In the following years, accrediting organizations standardized doctor training and held all to a high standard. Darling-Hammond argues that this is the best way to improve teacher quality, and that instead lowering teacher education requirements would be ineffective. Not only would it fail to provide the knowledge and skills teachers need to be successful, but it would further increase inequality. The lowest quality teachers today often teach the poorest children, and further lowering standards would mean that the greatest failures of the lowered standards system would teach those in the most need. Not only would this increase inequality, but Darling-Hammond argues that hard working, well intentioned teachers begin to foster resentment and solidify stereotypes when they fail with poor
children because they did not receive adequate teacher training (2010). Putting some of
our most courageous teachers in a position destined for failure makes the problems of our
education system seem insurmountable, and increases tension along class and racial lines.

Apple argues that the curriculum is constructed knowledge by those in power, so
a system of objective knowledge, authoritative teachers, and standardized testing implies
that this dominant set of knowledge is the only knowledge (2004). For example, the
interpretation of Christopher Columbus’ journey to North America told in textbooks
would be the correct and singular interpretation. There is not room for alternative
versions, or the expression of untold histories of minority groups. The objectivity of
knowledge assumption in the banking model allows the dominant groups of society to
define the world around us. A minority student might validly wonder if ze is American,
or if ze has the ability to make a difference. If every hero in a US History textbook was of
a different race than a student, the logical conclusions would be that ze should not
identify with the accomplishments and principles of the country, that ze is not a true
member of society, and that ze’s race is not something to be proud of in this country. A
curriculum based on objective knowledge, constructed by the dominant groups of society
is exclusive and disempowering to the minority groups whose stories are not told. This
reinforces feelings of superiority or inferiority, as well as fueling deep seeded resentment,
along all lines of historical prejudice, adding to the cultural splintering of our society. For
a country that declares itself a land of equal opportunity, it is hypocritical to support an
education system that entrenches a social hierarchy along the lines of race, gender, and
sexuality.
Another element of the Teacher U model is the importance of standardized testing as a means of accountability for teachers and schools. Nationwide standardized testing limits local differentiation of both content and methods, and is at odds with geographically diverse curricula and culturally relevant pedagogy. This causes inefficiency, potentially irrelevant content, and again stifles the ability of education to fight inequality by addressing diverse needs. If students are taught in only one way, social forces will ensure that that one way is most beneficial to those with power. Students that need an alternative form of learning will instead only be offered the conventional route, and will fall further behind. Standardized testing may also lead to increased inequality across class due to the effectiveness of expensive outside tutoring in raising test scores. Additionally, a focus on standardized testing may lead to “teaching to the test” instead of teaching for comprehension. If a desirable goal of education is to increase the intellectual ability of our society, teaching to the test is a clear waste of resources.

**Teacher U and Inequality**

To understand the implications of this new model of teacher education for social stratification, we must examine the functional and conflict theories of education. The functional theory of education is that education provides the skills necessary for jobs in society, and those that acquire more skills through education are placed in jobs that are demanding of more skills. The conflict theory of education is that education is a mark of membership in a status group, and that it teaches a certain set of values and culture characteristics, not technical skills. Under this theory, employers use education as a proxy
for certain status characteristics, and education socializes individuals for a certain place in society, either to defer to elites or to be part of the elite (Collins 1971).

These theories are important to discuss in the context of Teacher U because this model of teacher education is not implemented evenly across class. This style of teacher education is most often used to prepare teachers to teach in low income urban schools, as implied in the mission statement of Teacher U. The functional theory of education would suggest that this new model, if effective in raising achievement, would be an advantage to struggling youth. Inequality would decrease because previously low-achieving students would gain more skills and get better jobs as a result of the new teaching style. The functional theory of education would argue that that Teacher U decreases inequality when applied to only low-achieving students, and could increase overall productivity if applied to all students.

The conflict theory of education suggests that the Teacher U model of teaching is a signal to future employers that students have received a certain type of education and socialization. The teacher centered model socializes students to think of themselves as inferior relative to the teacher and to obey authority. The primary goal of content comprehension prepares students to accomplish tasks without cultivating empowerment. The implication of objective knowledge socializes students to accept a dominant interpretation of reality. Freire writes, “Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression” (1970:65). The conflict theory would argue that the new model prepares poor urban students for a job and place in society that has little power or autonomy. It suggests that the Teacher U model prepares students to be obedient and
efficient workers who accept their situation, and will not challenge the system or question their societal inferiority. Therefore, the conflict theory proposes that the Teacher U model, when applied to only low-income students, increases inequality and social stratification.

It is important to note that this argument would not hold up if this new style of teacher education were applied to all students evenly. During the Teacher U interview, the instructor said that she believed that their style of teaching is simply the most effective, and hoped that it would be used in every classroom in the country. If the style of teaching that Teacher U advocates were used for all students, all students would be socialized for obedience to authority. In this situation, the Teacher U model would not increase inequality, although the previous conclusions concerning creativity, student expression, teacher talent, minority exclusion, and standardized testing would still apply.

One’s conclusion about the effect of Teacher U on inequality depends on which model best describes the education system. The functional theory suggests that the Teacher U model would decrease inequality, while the conflict theory suggests that it would increase inequality. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully evaluate the validity of the functional and conflict theories of education and inequality. However, evidence from Randall Collins makes a strong case for the conflict theory as a more accurate theory to describe education in the United States historically (1971). Bowles and Gintis support this argument in a more recent article, in which they counter a functional theory of education with evidence that the contributions of education to higher pay have much to do with factors other than skills (2002).
Internal Problems With Expanding The Teacher U Model

Beyond the aforementioned implications of scaling up Teacher U, there is also an internal contradiction to doing so. Currently, Teacher U recruits an incredibly talented group of elite college graduates for their program. If this model were to be expanded, there would be a general devaluation of the teaching profession. Teaching would become a low-skill job because of its formulaic preparation, low-autonomy, and already low wages. Darling-Hammond argues that in Finland, the high-autonomy of teachers is a major reason why the profession is attractive (2010). For Teacher U, the social prestige of teaching and the exclusivity of the program are the key mechanisms for selection. They are able to attract talented individuals in spite of the low-autonomy because their program is exclusive and highly regarded socially. If the model was expanded and the entire profession was devalued, Teacher U would not be able to recruit only the best potential teachers, and the average skill level of their teachers would fall drastically.

Without a highly skilled group of teachers, the demands of the program would likely become too much, and the model would fail. The ability to recruit exclusively is crucial to the effectiveness of their program because of the incredible demands of learning to teach while maintaining responsibility of a classroom. During my visit, I repeatedly saw the students demonstrate an impressive awareness of the style of teaching they were learning. They were able to absorb the techniques they were being taught while also rethinking how they might use them to create the type of classroom they wanted. There is the danger that less critical thinking individuals might simply absorb and apply the Teacher U teaching style without examining the implications. For example, one of the videos shown during a lecture showed a teacher leading a morning call and response with
her ninth grade students. A number of Teacher U students reacted that the students were too old and it was a condescending, if effective, way of capturing class attention and setting a tone. The professor I interviewed at Teacher U admitted that, if used incorrectly, the style of teaching can be overly “didactic” and “militaristic”. The stakes for creating a classroom social environment are very high because classrooms socialize the people who make up the future of society. Teacher U functions under the premise that talented individuals can navigate the dangers of these techniques and the demanding nature of the job, but a less critical thinking teacher might not consider the nuances of a potentially disempowering the teaching style. If this is the case, then expanding this model of teacher education could lead to misuse of the techniques and “didactic”, “militaristic” classrooms.

A potential counter example to this is Teach For America. Teach For America has expanded enormously, and has had success for over twenty years. One might argue this proves that a highly selective, brief model of teacher education can survive expansion. However, Teach For America has not expanded to the scale capable of providing most of the teacher education needed across the country. They are still able to be selective because they have not expanded beyond their ability to do so. Moreover, Teach For America teachers do not stay very long in the profession, leaving at much faster rates than other new teachers. Their teachers often feel unprepared for the challenge and drop out under the pressure (Darling-Hammond 1994). Teach for America has not scaled up to the point that it can be a sustainable source of teachers for the majority of our public education system. Therefore it does not disprove the internal contradiction in the
expanded Teacher U model, that a devaluation of the profession and expansion of the model will rob the program of its crucial selective mechanisms.

**Conclusion**

As part of The New Teacher Education, Teacher U has the potential to expand nationally and affect our entire system of education. The implications of the Teacher U model of teacher education may significantly change society as a whole. If this is where our education system is headed, we must carefully examine the changes and implications in order to better understand them. Instead of instinctively championing innovation, it is important to make sure that changes are progress in the right direction.

This paper examines only one example of contemporary changes in teacher education, and more research is needed to explore the many other contemporary reforms. This paper also compares Teacher U to only three teacher education programs of higher education, and a more thorough assessment of traditional and innovative teacher education in higher education is needed.

This paper evaluates Teacher U only along the criteria outlined in the Models of Teacher Education section. The critical conclusions are not meant as a wholesale condemnation of the organization or their project. Teacher U very successfully recruits talented teachers, is incredibly well organized, efficient, and innovative, strives for self-reflection and improvement, employs thoughtful and caring instructors, and has the admirable goal of closing the achievement gap. However, we should be cautious about the implications of the Teacher U model of teacher education.
In response to my research question, I find that Teacher U is distinct from traditional graduate schools of education, and it differs in that it is a banking, technique driven, brief model of teacher education. The first set of implications of this is that the model devalues student expression, devalues the teaching profession, fails to cultivate critical thinking, creativity, or collaboration, and allows dominant groups of society to define a set of objective knowledge that may be disempowering to those not of the dominant group. Secondly, to the extent that the conflict model describes the education system, the Teacher U model increases inequality as it is currently applied to low-income students. Thirdly, expanding the Teacher U model would dilute the talent of teachers, and the model fails dangerously without highly skilled, critical thinking teachers. Children are the future of society, so we must be very deliberate with how we prepare those charged with the responsibility of cultivating their minds.

Bibliography


Appendix

Interview Questions:
What are the requirements for certification in your masters teacher education programs? How does your program teach teacher pedagogy?

How does your program teach classroom management?

What does a teacher education need to provide in order to prepare someone to teach (in terms of skills and content)?

What minimum requirements should someone have to meet in order to teach?

Is standardized testing an accurate or effective tool for assessing achievement?

What is the goal of education?

What is the role of the teacher in education?

Have you heard of the book “Teach Like A Champion by Doug Lemov”? The author ran a regression for student achievement based on socioeconomic status of students and found a number of teachers whose students performed far above their predicted achievement. He observed these teachers and came up with 49 common techniques that they generally used which he attributed to good teaching.

Lemov writes that teaching is an art, but any artist needs to first master the rudimentary skills of the art. Does your program’s philosophy agree with this?

Lemov argues that teaching future teachers effective ways to pass out papers and organize a chalkboard is important. Does your program’s philosophy agree with this?

What about teaching techniques such as waiting a few moments after asking a question to call on someone, or circling the room strategically?

Of these 49 techniques, which of these does your program explicitly teach? Which do they implicitly teach?

What do you think of technique driven teacher education as opposed to theory driven teacher education?