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Are We Turning Our Backs on Teacher Preparation? Lessons from France's System of Teacher Training

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Not surprisingly, in an increasingly neo-liberal context of international competition for educational prestige, conversations about teaching and teacher preparation have taken hold across the globe. Further complicating these matters is that ideas about teaching, learning, and learning to teach cannot be understood or analyzed in a vacuum; that is, without first exploring the history, evolution, purposes of, and tensions within the system in which they live. In this way, the realities of social change and globalization ensure that debates about what it means to prepare teachers well—in any context—are complex and enduring. In this article, I illuminate some of those complexities specifically as they relate to a comparison of university-based systems of teacher preparation in France and the United States. The issue of what it means to prepare teachers well for an increasingly diverse and global society is a prominent focus of this discussion.

Keywords: teacher preparation; learning to teach; education reform; comparative education; globalization and teacher education

The debate over teacher education, its purpose, and how it should be institutionalized and enacted—if at all—is not a new or unfamiliar one. Everyone has a vested interest in how children should be educated, and in turn, the qualifications that determine the readiness and expertise of those standing at the head of the classroom. In this, the question of *Who's teaching your children?* has inspired myriad—and often contentious—conversations about teacher quality, student achievement, how well institutions of teacher education are preparing future teachers, and the measures that might reveal as much. As a result, the direction and impact of education reform extend well beyond the classroom and public schools to the teacher colleges, universities, and educators with the responsibilities of implementing pedagogical preparation.

Not surprisingly, in an increasingly neo-liberal context of international competition for educational prestige, conversations about teaching and teacher preparation have taken hold across the globe. Further complicating these matters is that ideas about teaching, learning, and learning to teach cannot be understood or analyzed in a vacuum; in other words, understanding a nation's process of teacher education is a remiss endeavor without first exploring the history, evolution, purposes of, and tensions within individual systems.[1] In this way, the realities of social change and globalization ensure that debates about what it means to prepare teachers well—in any context—are complex and enduring. In the essay that follows, I discuss some of these complexities specifically as they relate to university-based teacher preparation in France and the United States.

Furthermore, I do not offer suggestions or advice for possible directions of teacher education reform. Instead, the purpose in this article is to raise questions about the direction of teacher education reform in the U.S. and its implications for what it means to prepare teachers well for an increasingly diverse and global society. Finally, while I use lessons from the reform of teacher preparation in France to illuminate issues as they are playing out in the U.S., I do not intend to limit the issues

and questions around reform to only these two domains; in this, readers are invited to apply the questions I raise to the education of teachers in their own national contexts.

Teacher Preparation: Framing the Problem

"The problem with education isn't that teachers are not properly trained, the problem is education policy that doesn't allow teachers to teach because they are busy adhering to the parameters of the education policy."[2]

"[V]ery little good can come from treating teachers like part-time cashiers at an underperforming Walmart outlet" (Lyons, 2011, para. 6).

These opening sentiments represent two camps least likely to inform education policy and reform in the United States. The first is a school teacher's response to position statement on www.ed.gov outlining United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's ideas for reforming schools of education. The entire response is substantial in length and adverse to the current direction of education reform. This is not surprising, as even a brief engagement with the views dominating educational policy reveals that reform is not always aligned with what teachers believe to be worthwhile, or necessary approaches to reforming education; instead, current educational policies do not allow teachers to teach, as is argued in the first statement.

In the second comment, the author uses a metaphor to caution against likening teachers to retail cashiers, a typically minimum-wage position not requiring specialized expertise or an expansive knowledge base obtained through years of academic study and field experience. This comment was published in *The National Memo*, an American daily online newsletter which might be thought of by more conservative camps as liberal, perhaps even heretical. The pro-teacher perspectives expressed in the above statements, because they do not easily and uncritically embrace the numbers, measurements, and quantification games so often espoused by reformers, tend to live on the margins of American educational policy.

Given the fringes and margins upon which these stakeholders and their perspectives exist, it is not surprising that the purposes and utility of the United States' university-based teacher preparation —the system in which the majority of our nation's teachers learn to teach—are called into question. As a result, "a competing agenda has been introduced to replace the traditional elements of professions—formal preparation, licensure, certification, and accreditation—with market mechanisms that encourage more open entry to teaching without expectations of training" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 36). Because a competing agenda is growing in momentum, in this article I contemplate issues and questions around the current movement to devalue university-based teacher education in the United States (e.g. Kumashiro, 2010). I use the example of France and its recently dissolved system of teacher preparation to analyze the utility of teacher education in the United States.

My prior research analyzing France's process of teacher preparation provides an extreme example of reform: The near total dissolution of a university department established to train teachers for teaching in the context of increased diversity and social change. It may seem odd, I realize, to compare two presumably different contexts to analyze a system as deeply embedded in history, politics, and culture as a nation's process of teacher preparation (see Judge et al., 1994). Nor has the U.S. yet to experience the eradication of their university-based (i.e., "traditional") system of university teacher education. Why, then, might it be helpful to think about France in the context of U.S. teacher preparation? The American system of university teacher preparation has experienced the proliferation of—and increasing federal support for—alternative routes to teaching; as well, there are heightened responsibilities imposed by the U.S. Department of Education and national accreditation councils on schools of education. University-based programs are held to increasingly rigorous standards and benchmarks purported to "prove" whether their teacher candidates are schooled adequately in pedagogy, content knowledge, and assessment. These transformations are occurring in a context where funding for traditional programs of teacher preparation continues to decrease.

For all that is unique to—and dissimilar about—France and the U.S., particularly in their educational contexts, the social changes which fuel/ed reforms of teacher education in both countries share similar characteristics. For example, the realities of mass education, post World War II, spurred a need to employ more teachers in both contexts given the sheer amount of students occupying schools and classrooms. The democratization of education, which followed soon thereafter, brought about goals for increased access to educational and professional opportunities for an increasingly diverse student population, as well as critical questions around the utility of a uniform classical education and the traditional methods with which content was delivered.

It is not surprising, then, that goals for attending to diversity, equity, and access entered teacher preparation discourse in both contexts, and continue to inform teacher education reform to the present day. While the U.S. has not yet experienced the total dissolution of university-based teacher preparation, it seems that current reforms—in the cropping up of alternative pathways to becoming a teacher in public schools, as well as alternatives to public education itself—indeed represent "a devaluing of teacher education" (Kumashiro, 2010, p. 57). Thus, we can use the example of France to better consider how education reform appears to push teacher education in the U.S. in a similar direction.

In what follows, I describe several reforms to university-based systems of teacher preparation in both the U.S. and France, and at times oscillate between the two for the purposes of closer comparison. I draw upon contextual details to describe some of the reasons for — and ways by which— the systems have been called to address goals for attending to diversity and equity. Following this discussion, I pose questions inspired by the dissolution of France's system of teacher preparation that consider whether and how efforts to reform education perpetuate the very problems they seek to improve. The issue of what it means to prepare teachers well for an increasingly diverse and global society is also the central question upon which I focus this discussion.

Teacher Preparation in Context: A Comparison of Two Dis/Similar Nations

The landscape of American public education is one of a racially, ethnically, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse student body. However, the disproportionate number of White, middleclass, female teachers, in relation to an increasingly diverse K-12 student population, is an issue well-documented in literature on public education. Statistics on student demographics compiled by the *National Center for Education Statistics* (1986, 1993, 2005) reveal that of the 39,753,172 total K-12 students enrolled in public schools in 1986, 16.1% were African American, and 9.9% were Hispanic. In 1993, African Americans made up 16.6% of the student population, while Hispanics made up 12.7%. While these increases seem nominal, it is important to note that by 1993, the public school student population climbed to 43,476,268. By 2005, African American and Hispanic students made up 17.2% and 19.8% of the public school population, which had climbed to a total of 49,113,474 students. Furthermore, statistical analyses cited in Banks et al. (2005) suggest that "by 2035, demographers project that students of color will constitute a majority of the student population in the United States"[3] (p. 232). Urban[4] schools in particular are known for their diverse student populations and communities/cities in which they are situated. Staffing urban schools with teachers prepared to teach diverse and historically underserved populations is a shared target of education reform and many schools of education.

Demographic data on the teaching force in the U.S. reveals stark homogeneity when compared to increasingly diverse student populations, and is another issue widely addressed in literature on American public education, particularly in the area of teacher preparation. A sample survey of 2,206 teachers published by NCES (1986) revealed that 89.6% of survey participants were White, and 68.8% of them were female. Available data reveal that by 2003-2004, of 2,795,000 public school teachers, Caucasian teachers accounted for 83.3% of all elementary school teachers and 84.5% of all secondary teachers (NCES). Given the realities of a homogenous teaching force in the context of increasingly diverse schools, it should come as no surprise that teachers must learn to teach in ways that go beyond content-knowledge acquisition and knowledge transmission.

At this juncture, I wish to reiterate that the degree to, and rate at which, U.S. schools are undergoing demographic change is not a characteristic exclusive to the American context of schooling. However, the extent to which racial statistics on U.S. schools are collected might be exclusive to the American context. France, for instance, continues to experience an influx of immigration, particularly with its North African Muslim and Arabic-speaking populations (Gurfinkiel, 1997; Keaton, 2006). And yet, for all that is changing racially, ethnically, and otherwise in this global society, statistics on racial demographics in France were not recorded, historically. As Greenwalt (2009) explains, "until recently, collecting statistics on the racial demographics of France was illegal (and is still highly restricted)" (p. 512).

Despite the impasse to collecting statistics of racial demographic change in France, there is a plethora of sociological research which in/directly illustrates the need to address social change in schools (see Judge, 2004; Keaton, 2006; Bell, 2005; Greenwalt, 2009). Such research, in my view, is as compelling—if not more so— than the carefully compiled numerical data so easily obtained in numerous American surveys. Demographic change is manifest in France's public schools by way of race, ethnicity, religion, and social class, all of which suggests a move away from French ideals for a homogenous national identity. In France, demographic change is in direct and constant conflict with secular French values and educational policies and purposes (see Judge, 2004; Keaton, 2006); as with the U.S., such conflicts are very often to the detriment of minority and immigrant students' academic and professional futures.

Similarly to the United States, disadvantaged populations in France are often relegated to—and condensed in—underprivileged communities and schools. As Judge (2004) explains, "the crude and cruel sociological fact [is] that immigrant communities are concentrated in deprived areas, where both the cycle of disadvantage and a widespread sense of grievance and frustration are reinforced" (p. 7-8). These enclaves are often located in France's outer-cities, for which the American understanding of the term "suburb," according to Judge (2004), "is a dangerously misleading translation" (p. 7). However, whether we are addressing teacher preparation for France's "urban periphery" (Keaton, 2006) or America's urban cities, the issues remain similar. In France, the educational policies in place to ameliorate under-performing public schools are instead known for their punitive practices and disenfranchisement of minority populations (Keaton, 2006). These realities are reminiscent of what occurs in policies and practice in

many American urban (*inner*-city) schools, and provides a rich context for comparison.

For all of their differences, the need to prepare teachers for the realities facing many public schools is a concept familiar to both French and American contexts. In my work in France, I observed approximately twenty prospective teachers defend their theses, among other formats used to assess how well teachers are prepared for placement in a French public school. Now that university-based teacher education in France is dissolved—and at the time of my study, without a replacement—my focus takes on new meaning. That is, rather than contemplating *how* prospective teachers are prepared for an increasingly diverse and global society, the question becomes "whether": Will aspiring teachers in France receive an education in pedagogy and content beyond a standardized state exam?

With even a cursory glance at demographic data on schools and societies, the implications for education are clear: Many countries are facing demographic and social change, and teachers are tasked with learning about—and understanding—the issues and circumstances facing the increasingly diverse students in their care. University-based teacher education in both French and American contexts has evolved toward preparing their teachers for the reality of demographic change. However, the efforts of traditional teacher preparation programs to ameliorate inequities in schooling are undermined by the very policies in place to ensure effective preparation (see Kumashiro, 2010). In what follows, I outline this particular issue as it has played out in both French and American teacher reform.

What Does it Mean to Prepare Teachers for Service in the United States?

Given the rate of demographic and social change in the U.S., university-based teacher preparation programs have responded in several ways to the need to prepare prospective teachers for service in increasingly diverse and high needs schools. Many programs have proactively infused multicultural materials into their teacher education curriculum as well as structured time for reflection; many schools of education are also partnered with urban and low-income public schools to provide preservice teachers with mentored field experiences. For example, Quartz et al. (2003) discuss how the University of California at Los Angeles has partnered with high-needs communities as sites for novice teacher professional development. In many teacher education classrooms, instructors employ curriculum focused on developing cross-cultural competence in new teachers.[5]

Because university teacher education programs are held accountable at the federal level for producing "highly qualified"[6] teachers, a minimum grade-point average, passing test score, a content-specific teaching license, and the minimum of a bachelor's degree are all required to become a teacher. Additionally, teacher education programs in the U.S., to remain accredited, answer to organizations such as the *National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education* (NCATE) and the *Teacher Education Accreditation Council* (TEAC), which "require programs to provide documentation that prospective teachers are able to use knowledge of content and pedagogy in their teaching" (Gitomer, 2007, p. 8). Additionally, in recent history, a new entity, the *Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (*CAEP*)*, has emerged to:

> ensure that educator preparation providers (EPPs) prepare and graduate future teachers who know the content of the subject(s) they will teach, know how to teach that content effectively to students from diverse groups, and demonstrate their positive impact on P-12 student learning in diverse school settings. (CAEP, 2010)

Ostensibly, one goal of education reform dictated by *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and accreditation councils is to ensure that teacher education programs are producing teachers capable of teaching and engaging diverse student populations and addressing inequities in education. However, it is worth noting that *CAEP's* framework for standards for accreditation employ scant, superficial use of the term "diverse," and virtually no attention to issues related to equity in learning to teach. They do, however, employ abundant use of the terms "assessment" and "data."

Given *CAEP*'s close alignment with schools' increasingly ubiquitous adoption of the Common Core Standards (NCATE, 2012), what it means to prepare teachers for "effective work in schools" (CAEP, 2010) has emphasized knowing *what* to teach versus knowing *how* to teach. Accordingly, the term "pedagogy" is given scant attention on *CAEP*'s framework for standards, processes, and procedures. Perhaps it might be argued that scant or ambiguous use of particular terms in a framework for educational standards implies that programs are free to approach teacher preparation on their own terms; however, the imposition of a framework for standards and accreditation emphasizing data driven decisions "about candidates and programs" (CAEP) *inherently* espouses a value-added approach to teacher education, where numbers speak louder than pedagogy.

In all of this, sanctioned ideas about preparing teachers for an increasingly diverse and global society appear antithetical to realizing that goal. For example, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation, in conjunction with national competitions such as *Race to the Top*, does little to support teachers' practice in ways that encourage developing intercultural knowledge and/or equitable access to curriculum (Winerip, 2011). Take, for another example, the *Standards for Rating the Nation's Education Schools*, as defined by the *National Council on Teaching Quality* (NCQT). The NCQT provides guidelines for

schools of education to follow in allowing prospective teachers entry into the program and profession. Here again, it is worth noting that the word "test" is used seventeen times within the guidelines; "evaluation" is used in nine instances; the word "outcome" is used three times, and such words as "diversity," "culture," "equity," and "engage" (or similar words) do not appear at all. The word choice in a document outlining standards for rating teacher education schools in the United States begs questions about that which is valued in teacher preparation/learning and that which is not.

Thus, the emphasis of education reform in the U.S. remains on costly content-and fact-based licensure exams, students' test scores as markers of teachers' merit and other value-added measures of "quality," time-consuming paper-pushing in the name of teacher "quality," and the diminution of carefully structured field experiences prior to full-time teaching. Teacher preparation programs are also implicated in and by these value-added models of assessing "quality," as reformers are currently working on ways by which to use student test scores to evaluate preservice teachers, as well as the university-based education programs responsible for preparing the preservice teachers of these students (Sawchuk, 2011).

So what does it mean to prepare teachers for service in today's schools? Complicating the reliance on numerical data to determine one's readiness/worth/"quality" as a teacher in the U.S., as well as the value of any single teacher preparation program, is the cultural disconnect from, or racial and cultural "mismatch" (Fry & McKinney, 1997) between the traditionally white, middle-class teaching force and diverse student populations in its care (see Banks et al., 2005; Sleeter, 2007). Sleeter's (2007) work in preparing teachers for diversity and underserved schools and communities expounds upon this concern: "[American] White preservice teachers lack of cross-cultural knowledge is a direct result of the racial isolation in which most White people grow up and live" (p. 172). According to Sleeter, these prospective educators "bring to teacher education very little cross-cultural knowledge and experience" (p. 172). Many university-based teacher education programs in the U.S. attempt to address these issues with relevant coursework, strategies, mentoring, and structured opportunities for reflection, in varying ways.

However, it is not a simple task to disrupt or quantify a teacher's dispositions toward teaching, learning, and their students; nor can a university-based curriculum guarantee purposeful application to the field. Not only, then, are prospective teachers said to bring a lack of cross-cultural knowledge and experience *to* teacher education, but, according to the dominant political discourse on matters in relationship to teacher preparation, novice teachers are also said to *leave* many teacher education programs lacking the necessary knowledge and experience required to meet the realities of today's classrooms (Medina, 2009; Sleeter, 2007). Current Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has been particularly critical of university teacher preparation in this regard, arguing that "[b]y almost any standard, many if not most of the nation's 1,450 schools, colleges and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st-century classroom," (Medina, 2009). While the term "mediocre" is not often explicated in any meaningful way by those whom espouse it, it is reasonable to assume that it is used to make arbitrary claims about dismally low standardized test scores, and thus teaching and learning, in the United States and elsewhere. Duncan and others have thus openly promoted fast-track alternative to becoming a teacher.

Alternatives to Learning to Teach: "What" versus "How"

Examples of federally-supported alternative routes to teaching include the large and growing *Teach for America* organization, as well as the more regional *Teaching Fellows Program*, in New York City; *Teach for America* is perhaps the United States' largest example of an organization offering fast-tracks to teaching, and is not aligned with most traditional models of university-based teacher preparation. However, both of these organizations place new teachers in high-needs schools after a comparably brief interaction with coursework and minimal classroom experience prior to gaining "teacher" status (in some cases, preparation is not quite the length of a single summer).

These programs, and others like them, appear to revolve around securing "high quality" or "highly-talented" candidates to "close the achievement gap" (this is language peppered throughout their missions and testimonials). Closing the achievement gap,[7] whatever its interpretation, is perhaps a noble goal; here again, though, the abbreviated approach to teacher preparation, as evidenced in alternative programs, *might* suggest that learning *what* to teach takes precedence over learning *how* to teach. This assumption is supported by the growing emphasis on teaching to the test, test scores as a measure of teacher quality, and teacher-proof and scripted curricula, to give just a few examples. It seems, then, that teachers' practice, students' lives and communities, and the importance of understanding the sociopolitical issues and structures in which schools and teachers are embedded and constrained are becoming null in the discourse of learning to teach. Furthermore, the proliferation of federally funded alternative teacher education programs has inspired questions of whether or not a university degree in teaching is becoming moot.[8]

Is a University Degree in Teaching any Longer Necessary?

The federally sanctioned rise of alternative routes to becoming a teacher has done much to undermine

university-based teacher preparation in the U.S. Cries of traditionalism and mediocrity, combined with federal cuts to colleges and departments of education, all suggest a move to dissolve the value of university-based teacher education and thus a degree in teaching. This is an important reality to consider when, according to extant research, whether alternative tracks to becoming a teacher are more effective than traditional teacher education remains inconclusive.[9]

For all that is incontrovertible in issues of education—e.g., the need for all students to receive a "quality" education—there are several questions which consistently beg our attention, particularly in the area of teacher preparation, and to which there are not clear or unanimous answers: What does it mean to prepare teachers well for an increasingly diverse and global society? Is a university degree in teaching any longer a justifiable route to becoming a teacher? If the answer to the latter question is "no," then what does it mean to learn to teach? As I have argued thus far, policies dictated by NCLB legislation and teacher education accreditation councils, coupled with federally supported alternative routes to becoming a teacher have severely undermined university-based teacher preparation in the United States. As Kumashiro (2010) points out, "Such support for…alternative routes [to teacher preparation] signals not merely an increase in competition for teacher preparation programs but, more significant, a devaluing of teacher education altogether, which is often symbolized by the more 'traditional' routes" (p. 56). Again, given the push to devalue university-based teacher education, it seems that the importance of learning *how* to teach has taken a backseat to learning *what* to teach. This is the very idea which appears to have informed recent education reform in France. In what follows, I use the story of France's dissolved system of teacher preparation to raise questions around the implications for teacher education in the United States and any context in which university-based teacher preparation and schools of education are losing valuable support.

Are We Turning Our Backs on Teacher Preparation? Lessons from France

In *The University and the Teachers*, a series of Oxford Studies in Comparative Education, Judge et al. (1994) cite the main commonality in the purposes of schooling characteristic to both America and France as "educating the citizen" (p. 98). In these countries, "education and freedom, education and democracy" (p. 98) are synonymous goals. As I mention above, goals for attending to diversity, equity, and access entered the discourse surrounding teacher preparation in both contexts, and continue to inform teacher education reform to the present day. As with the United States, the realities of a culturally and ethnically changing France inspire questions about what it means to prepare teachers well for the students who are to eventually inhabit their classrooms. An increasingly diverse population, combined with enduring debates around a uniform French identity, secularism, and goals for social solidarity call into question historical commitments to identity preservation and education for a civic and secular body.

Teacher-preparation in France, from 1991 through 2010, was carried out in teacher-trainer institutes across the nation known as *l'Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres* [IUFM].[10] The creation of the IUFM was a response social and educational change. The new teacher-training curriculum was integrated, requiring prospective teachers to gain "knowledge of and about the discipline or disciplines to be taught, the management of learning (pedagogics and didactics), and familiarity with the educational system" (Judge et al., 1994, p. 88). This symbolizes a tremendous shift in ideas about learning to teach as, historically, attention to teachers' practice was reserved for institutions in which only primary and lower-secondary teachers were trained. Until the IUFM, upper-secondary teachers were not required to undergo formal pedagogical training, as a solid foundation in content-knowledge was all that was required to teach at the upper-secondary level.

The IUFM consisted of a two-year teacher-training program, with a competitive exam after the first year. All candidates needed a Bachelor's degree or equivalent to qualify for entry. Aspiring teachers who wished to gain admission into the first year of the IUFM furnished an application (or more accurately, a *dossier*), took an entry test, or sat for an interview, depending on the particular institute.[11] There were seven separate exams for entry into the second year of training with the IUFM, all of which tested for a combination of content knowledge and "professional competence and aptitude" (Judge et al., 1994, p. 88).

The second and final year of teacher-training at the IUFM is compulsory for all students. Teacher-trainees enjoyed a year of paid training in a local institution under the supervision of teacher-trainers and professors within the institute, and less frequently, Inspectors affiliated with the Ministry of Education.[12] A variety of oral and written assessments, vetted by an IUFM panel, were used to determine one's teaching ability and content knowledge acquisition. Students must also provide evidence of a successful in-service experience in order to complete program requirements. Upon program completion—two years of course work, the second year of which students also engage in field work in area schools—successful students gain appointment into a primary or secondary school (depending on their field of study), as determined by the Ministry.

As with many teaching programs in the United States, teacher-training at the IUFM incorporated a wide range of ongoing assessments as a direct response to the realities of a changing society and classroom challenges (Foster, 2008). Teacher training in France soon came to

represent the idea that pedagogical skill and assessing students' needs are as essential to learning to teach as a solid foundation in content knowledge. In this, the creation of the IUFM is symbolic of a radical era leading to a breakdown of historical beliefs and assumptions about what it means, in France, to prepare teachers well for a changing society.

The recent reforms to teacher-training in France are many, and do little to preserve the integrity of the IUFM's mission to merge content-knowledge and teachers' practice into a meaningful teacher-training curriculum. As of the fall of 2010, prospective teachers are only required to sit for an exam in order to become full-time teachers. Teacher-training courses incorporating pedagogical theory and didactics are no longer a substantial part of the curriculum, if these courses exist at all. End-of-training oral and written exams and portfolios, once administered to all students and assessed by IUFM faculty and directors, are also now a part of France's teacher-training history. The IUFM's role in classroom observations, where students previously enjoyed consistent, on-site feedback by teacher-trainers and professors with the IUFM, has all but diminished; the majority of this responsibility is now left to the Ministry of Education and corresponding system of inspection. Official, on-site mentoring by experienced teachers is no longer a mandated—or sufficiently compensated—component of France's teacher-training structure. Novice teachers are now given the responsibilities of a full teaching load without the mentoring, guidance, coursework, and assessments of teacher practice that existed within the former structure of the IUFM.[13]

It is far too simplistic, even incorrect, to suggest that the circumstances surrounding educational change in both contexts are identical. Instead, for all that is similar in educational matters between France and the U.S., there are extreme differences to note: France's public schools, as a part of a centralized system of education, are institutions in which, to this day, the *culture générale* is a highly guarded construct, staunchly resistant to change. This idea is supported in persisting debates around a national identity (Erlanger, 2009). Highly guarded ideas about a *culture générale* are also evident in recent legislation banning Muslim headscarves in public places (including schools), thereby maintain a society of secularism in the face of increased immigration and religious diversity (Judge, 2004). However, so as to better respond to the realities of social change, the IUFM was designed to foreground teachers' practice and employ a curriculum in which a focus on content knowledge and test-preparation, while important, was no longer paramount to learning to teach.

Education reformers in France, though, have dissolved the very system established to "[shift] the emphasis of teacher training away from the preparation for a competitive exam towards the needs of pupils" (Foster, 2000, p. 6). Similarly, the combination of increasingly punitive value-added measures of teaching and learning for public schools and schools of education, incentivized "fast-tracks" to becoming a teacher, and cuts in funding for university-based teacher education implies a decreased value assigned to pedagogy and teachers' practice in the U.S. Here again, given these shifts—in both contexts—and what they mean for teacher preparation, the importance of learning *how* to teach appears to have taken a backseat to learning *what* to teach. What, then, does it mean to prepare teachers well for an increasingly diverse and global society?

Implications/Conclusions

In all of this, it is important to consider whether and how efforts to reform education perpetuate the very problems they seek to improve. When we move away from preparing teachers for the realities of social change in ways that rely on value-added measures, to what extent are we moving away from our original, noble goals of democratic education, thereby maintaining an unacceptable status quo? As Kumashiro (2010) points out in relationship to teacher preparation in the U.S., "Preservice teacher education needs to be strengthened, not discarded—but this is not the direction that current reforms are headed" (p. 57). To extend this idea, what are we suggesting to our teachers, students, and other stakeholders in education when we discard a system in which prospective teachers are encouraged to engage issues of diversity, equity, and learning in meaningful and sustainable ways? What are we suggesting when we replace comprehensive, university-based programs and schools of education with short-cut training models? In 2010, France dissolved its system of teacher-training without developing a replacement; what value are we assigning to the importance of preparing teachers well for an increasingly diverse and global society when we underfund or dissolve a system without much critical thought about how to improve or replace it? If we choose not to improve *or* replace a system of teacher education, to whom will prospective teachers turn for learning? Finally, what messages are we sending to the global community—particularly Finland and Singapore, two nations in which teachers are revered and their preparation valued and to which the U. S. is often erroneously compared—when we turn our backs on meaningful teacher preparation?

Recall that my original intent is not to discuss direct ramifications —or suggested directions—of teacher education reform. The issues of education reform that I overview above—especially as they play out in France—are recent and still developing. The point is to raise questions about the value we assign to pedagogy and teacher learning when we prize incentivized short-cuts over actual teacher preparation, or when we support the extreme move to altogether dissolve the only system in place to prepare teachers. As Lyons (2011) reminds us,

"very little good can come from treating teachers like part-time cashiers at an underperforming Walmart outlet" (para. 6).

Finally, in all of these transformations to education, as they occur in the United States and abroad, it is interesting to ponder the stories that are yet to be told about teaching and education reform. As Judge et al. (2009) point out,

> to understand teacher education, above all in a cross-national framework, is to understand much more than teacher education. How teachers are educated, and where and by whom, reflect beliefs about what teachers are for and why society employs them. Any examination of such beliefs must unpack underlying theories of the purposes of an education provided by the State. (p. 9)

In a context where education reform is—for better or for worse—an enduring, cross-national goal, an analysis of teacher education reform provides rich and important opportunities for comparison and reflection, as well as opportunities to glean deeper insights into our assumptions and beliefs about what it means to educate teachers and why.

In closing, for as long as the United States' teaching force remains racially and culturally mismatched from schools' diverse student populations, the issues and questions presented in this essay remain factual, poignant, and inevitable: Teachers are indeed learning to teach in an increasingly diverse and global society. To short-change this important work by incongruently supporting and rewarding alternative approaches to teacher education while loudly and arbitrarily devaluing, defunding, and disenfranchising others; by attempting to quantify every conceivable aspect of teaching, learning, and learning to teach by emphasizing *only* numeric, data-driven decisions, is to perhaps perpetuate—*not* ameliorate—the very problems in education that all stakeholders seek to improve. That is, we might consider how, when numbers speak louder than pedagogy, we move *away* from preparing teachers for the realities of social change. We instead align educators' work *not* with how well they teach, but with how adept they become at adhering to the parameters of the education policy.

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Notes

[1] See Judge et al. (1994) for an in depth comparison of university and school systems in France, the United States, and England.

[2] A stakeholder responds to United States Secretary of State Arne Duncan's ideas for reforming schools of education. The blog- post can be accessed in full at (http://www.ed.gov/blog/2011/09/duncan-introduces-plan-to-reform-and-improve-teacher-prep/)

[3] While the statistics focus on African American and Hispanic students, the goal of this paper is not intended to ignore many other kinds of diversity comprising American public schools, including cognitive, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors.

[4] I realize that this term, "urban," is associated with very different connotations across international contexts. In the U.S., for example, the term "urban" is associated with racial and socioeconomic diversity. Schools in urban centers are typically under-resourced and experience great difficulty in attracting and maintaining a qualified teaching force (Oakes et al., 2002). However, the term "urban" in France is not necessarily associated with negative connotations to the same extent as its "outer-cities," and is a distinction I discuss below.

[5] However, the ways by which individual programs incorporate these elements–and the extent to which they are said to be thoughtful and effective–vary, and is a discussion far exceeding the scope of this piece.

[6] This article is not a perspective on "teacher quality," per se; it is, however, virtually impossible to talk about current reform without using this term, as the discourse surrounding teacher education reform (and education reform in general) very much espouses terminology of "teacher quality" and "quality teaching."

[7] This term, in the United States, is often used in discussions of how minoritized students are measuring up to their White, middleclass peers. I do not purport that this is not a problematic term, nor do I wish to maintain that a critical analysis of this term –particularly of the word "achievement"-- is unwarranted. However, it is common, familiar language in the field of education, and a critical analysis of why this term is so deeply problematic exceeds the scope of my discussion.

[8] The "Room for Debate" daily New York Times column provides a thoughtful discussion on this very topic and can be accessed here: http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/education-degrees-and-teachers-pay/

[9] This discussion is focused primarily on alternative routes to teacher education, and does not account for other ways by which public education has been undermined by neo-liberal efforts, such as with the proliferation of charter schools, school vouchers, "school choice" programs, and the intense demonizing of public schools and subgroups of students who fail to meet academic benchmarks. A larger discussion of these issues far exceeds the scope of this article.

[10] University Institutes of the Formation of Teachers

[11] Obtained from an undated, translated brochure outlining the requirements for entry into the IUFM.

[12] The Ministry of Education represents the centralized system in which educational matters are vetted and controlled in France, and is another important characteristic distinguishing the French system of education from the American system. In addition to determining one's placement in a school, Judge et al point out that "It is the Ministry which establishes the institutions and arrangements for the training of teachers…and which, officially through Parisian texts and less formally through control by Inspectors, determines the nature and content of all forms of teacher education" (Judge et al., p. 34).

[13] This information is based on a funded research project, 'Mediocrity' and crises in education: A comparative analysis in the context of reform, wherein I collected data on teacher preparation in the context of France's education reform.

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