EDCI: 798B: Special Topics in Teacher Education:  
Transforming Teacher Education in Maryland

February 5th, March 5th, April 2nd and May 7th  
11:15am – 2:50pm  
Benjamin 2212

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Course Description: Teacher education in the US is under intense scrutiny from policy makers and the public, politicians and the media. There are newspaper stories and national reports, media segments and legislative actions all determined to recast, reframe and redesign teacher education. Debates about extending, constraining or eliminating teacher education are widespread with a host of new “players” engaged in these policy debates. This 1-3 variable credit course will explore what Bales (2006) describes as the “tug-of-war” between state and national authorities in the US for control of every aspect of teacher education. The course will examine how Maryland is responding to the demand for change in teacher education in this larger context.

There are a number of reasons for this interest in teacher education in Maryland at this time. Among these are the challenges that CCSS and PARCC present to the preparation of teachers, new program accreditation standards for teacher education (CAEP), calls for better alignment between the community college ATT programs and those offered by universities in the State, the plethora of alternative preparation programs, and recent reports criticizing teacher education in the State. Recently, the National Council for Teacher Quality awarded Maryland a D+ for it efforts at “delivering well prepared teachers” to the schools of Maryland (NCTQ, 2013). NCTQ faulted Maryland for every

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1This variable credit is intended for doctoral candidates in education. Other advanced students will be welcome. We are borrowing the “politics of policy” descriptor from a recent paper authored by Boston College’s Marilyn Cochran-Smith and colleagues. Our objective for the course is to engage students in a thoughtful examination of the politics of policymaking for teacher education. We will consider Cochran-Smith’s theoretical framework as an approach to understanding the “revisioning of teacher education.”
facet of teacher education – from inadequate admission requirements to unacceptable student teacher mentoring. We will seek to understand teacher education policy formation in Maryland and the influence that established (like the Maryland Education Association and the Maryland School Board Association) and emerging policy entrepreneurs (like NCTQ) have on the process.

We will seek to understand the various governmental bodies that shape teacher education policy in the State and the efforts in Maryland to create new accountability expectations, align teacher education with Common Core State Standards, distribute high performing teachers to underperforming schools, attract and retain more high quality teachers and “teachers of color,” better assess candidates and their performance in the classroom, infuse technology in preparation programs, generate closer collaboration between schools and colleges, and focus on “classroom management” issues. Efforts by an array of new providers seeking recognition to prepare teachers, a looming teacher shortage, and a demand for new teachers able to teach all students, are leading policy makers and policy entrepreneurs to consider changes in the ways that Maryland recruits, prepares, licenses, places, supports, evaluates, compensates and rewards teachers.

This course will examine these issues from the perspective of university-based teacher education programs. Students who select the one credit option will read and analyze contemporary policy documents, attend and participate in the four sessions, and contribute to the on-going CANVAS discussion, and prepare a policy brief. Students who select two or three credits will undertake these same requirements as well as preparing a substantial writing assignment and attending one or more “briefings” in Washington.

Course Goal: Our objective for this course is to engage students in an understanding of trends and developments that are reshaping teacher education in Maryland. This course presumes that the students enrolled will become teacher educators – either professional development specialists in local school districts and other learning environments or teacher education faculty in two-and-four-year colleges and universities. We will look at the outside forces that are reshaping teacher education at both the State and national level and encourage you to examine teacher education programs that are responding to these forces in new ways. We will consider why a shift is underway from an emphasis on teaching to the current primacy of student learning and now back to a consideration of good teaching. We will examine the ways that programs of preparation and professional development address these shifts and seek to understand the constraints imposed on programs and the guidance provided by institutional, state, federal and professional agencies and the impact this is having on programs and structures.

Such programs are being dramatically reshaped by policymakers at the federal, state and local level – as well as by college and university leaders. Cochran-Smith and others argue that there are political agendas that shape these policies and policymaking. “Reformists” (at both ends of the political spectrum) have a distinct agenda - greater efficiency, lower cost, more accountability, reduced “life space,” improved effectiveness, great measurable impact on K-12 student learning, etc. Others (so called “professionalists”) see the need to increase “life space” and attend to social justice and to rely more on “critical theory” in
teacher education, giving teachers more “tools” to make important curricula and pedagogical decisions. Professionalists would place greater attention on matters of equity and responsibility, diversity and opportunity for all students. Reformists believe the barriers to teaching are too restrictive and traditional programs are too theoretical. While some continue to argue that subject matter knowledge is all that really matters and a few policymakers contend that teaching is a “natural act” and that recruiting better candidates to teaching would result in better teaching, policy for teacher education seems to be dictated by political stance (political ideology) with often surprising alliances of political conservatives and political liberals - seeking to affect policy for teacher education.

Everyone seems in agreement that teacher education must change - but how teacher education should be transformed is the issue. From roughly the 1950s until the 1990s there was relative uniformity in the way that teachers were prepared in the US. This has changed dramatically in recent years and there is now a multiplicity of ways that teachers come to teaching – alternative and traditional routes, face-to-face and on-line programs, short-term and extended models, undergraduate and post-graduate offerings, school-based and college-centered efforts – with everyone seeking the one best way to prepare teachers. Recently, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) issued a new set of standards for teacher education. These and other initiatives by “education professionals” may influence the future of teacher education but we will also seek to understand how “reformists” have assumed a powerful role and are more likely to influence these issues. We will want you to understand the way that politics is shaping teacher education policy – and is likely to shape the outcome of the current controversy over teacher education in Maryland and elsewhere in the US.

The expectation is that in this course faculty and students will interact with prominent policy leaders in the field and draw implications for the teacher education programs at the University of Maryland. This course is intended to enable students to both understand why university-situated teacher education is under such stress and the consequences of that stress on schools and colleges of education – and on faculty and aspiring teacher educators and researchers. The course will draw from contemporary policy documents and policy briefs and put a premium on discerning trends and developments underway at the federal, state, and campus level. The goal of the course is to identify ways to study and change teacher education programs in the University of Maryland System.

The course is premised on an understanding of contemporary issues in American education and the effects that shifting policies and practices are having on programs that prepare teachers and other school personnel in the State.

**Course Overview:** Teacher education is at a “cross-roads” in the way that it addresses an array of problems and issues. Greater accountability demands, expectations for greater alignment with K-12 based curriculum, more candidate assessment (that extends into the initial years of teaching), and an array of new “providers” of teachers now dominate the landscape. Traditional policy entrepreneurs (NGA, NCSL, CCSSO, etc.), who once shaped the agenda for teacher education, are now challenged by policy entrepreneurs across the policy spectrum (with the American Legislative Exchange
Council (ALEC), the AEI, NCTQ and CATO) among the most aggressive of the new “players.”

In the first seminar we will explore the push for the Redesign of Maryland’s teacher education programs. It has been fourteen years since the State embarked on a major redesign effort and this one is being launched with the leadership of the State Superintendent and the Chancellor of the University of Maryland System. This seminar will seek to understand the sources for these new efforts and what promise they hold for teacher education. We will use the Cochran-Smith, Piazza and Power (2013) frame and rely on Lewis and Young’s (2013) analytic piece to understand the sources for these policy proposals and their possible implications for graduate schools of education. We will consider Bales’ (2007) theoretical piece on sense-making and the role of faculty in the transformation of programs. We will try and answer the question of why now? What are the big compelling ideas? Is there evidence that these ideas might transform PK-12 student learning? Who is leading the “push” and what are their motives and intentions? Who are the “policy entrepreneurs” and where are the intersections? Is there a timeline? Do we see a “window of opportunity?”

A second seminar will focus on the push to attract better candidates to teaching. There is a press to raise admission and exit standards for teacher education but to use conventional measures of candidate performance (GPA, PRAXIS scores, prior experiences, etc.) to determine whether candidates are of the highest quality. What do we mean by “better”? Are there new ways to measure candidate aptitude and ability? How do we incentivize teaching to attract better candidates? What are the consequences of this push for higher quality on the effort to have a teacher workforce that resembles the student population? Given the press to use edTPA in Maryland, how does this serve the demand for higher standards?

The third seminar will focus on the press for a seamless transition between preparation and practice. Since last November’s Maryland Summit on Teacher Education, a major consideration for those shaping teacher education policy is a focus on the “transition” period – when candidates move from being an intern (in a Professional Development School) to a novice teacher (in one of Maryland’s public schools) to an accomplished beginner (eligible for tenure in a county school system). What do we know about the process and how do we improve it? Where are the intervention points? How do we promote closer collaboration between preparation programs and public schools? Can we reinvent PDSs (and fund them adequately)? Can we “recruit” and prepare better mentor teachers? How do we better connect interns, mentors, principals and supervisors? Does the State need to invest in more residency programs? Are the residency models from Boston, Denver and Chicago viable for Maryland to use? What role should preservice programs play in induction? How would we measure the success of such efforts? How do we pay for more robust induction programs – in which collegiate based teacher educators play a prominent role? Will these changes promote substantial reconsideration of faculty expectations for scholarship and practice?
The final seminar will be directed at understanding the “policy levers” that will drive the new REDESIGN in Maryland. What are those policy levers? Who will drive the reform strategy? What are the expectations? What are the accountability “tools” that teacher education programs in Maryland will be challenged to use? How does MSDE “fit” into these considerations? What is the role of the State Board? Can the recognition process be strengthened? Will all providers be “treated the same”?

**Course Objectives:** This course has been designed to both draw upon as well as enrich the knowledge gained from other courses that focus on contemporary issues in education. It is intended to provide a solid scholarly foundation for solving practical problems in colleges and universities and in other educational settings. Students will:

- use Kingdon’s policy frame to consider the redesign of teacher education in Maryland
- use Cochran-Smith’s frame of discourse analysis to study policy making for teacher education
- analyze current policy streams and the influence of politics on the formulation of policy in Maryland
- explore policies being promoted by policy entrepreneurs
- identify the key policy entrepreneurs and the ways they influence policy process in Maryland
- explore the role of the media in shaping opinion regarding teacher education in Maryland
- examine the implications of various policy initiatives for teacher education
- analyze power relations in teacher education policymaking
- identify policy levers and how these are used to implement changes

**Course Focus:** EDCI 789A will focus on three overarching questions: (1) What are the current forces that are reshaping collegiate-based teacher education? What are the sources for these forces? What are the political and policy agendas that undergird these forces and make teacher education so problematic? (2) What are the dominant policies that promote new forms of teacher education and professional development? What is the research that undergirds these policy proposals? How is policy shaped by politics? (3) What are the best ways of preparing beginning teachers and developing practicing teachers in a world of many program choices and changing paradigms for practice?

**Class Meeting Schedule:**

- **February 5th** Seminar #1: *The Redesign of Teacher Education in Maryland: Policy Frames and the Study of Teacher Education Policy*
- **March 5th** Seminar #2: *Better Teachers: Better Teaching (Constraints and Barriers)*
- **April 2nd** Seminar #3: *Building Effective Induction Programs: Creating Seamless Transitions*
May 7th  Seminar #4  Driving Changes for Teacher Education in the State: New Roles and Expectations for Faculty

Requirements:
1. Reading Education Week, Inside Higher Education, The Chronicle of Higher Education and other relevant or accompanying blogs and education news media during the Fall 2013 and posting a monthly digest of key ideas.

2. Reading assigned readings posted to CANVAS and coming to class prepared to discuss them.

3. Posting a reflection of the seminar discussion, presentations and readings on the CANVAS discussion board within the first week following the seminar. What was a key idea you derived from the seminar and how do you believe it affects your role as a future scholar, researcher, faculty member or professional development provider?

4. For students electing a 2 or 3 credit option for this course, a substantial writing assignment will be expected regarding a contemporary problem facing teacher education. The Task Force on Teacher Education has identified seven topics on which they are focusing attention. The paper (20-25 pages with a substantial bibliography) topic should focus on one of these topics. This should be discussed with faculty during the first month of the course. An accompanying expectation for 2 or 3 credit option students will be that they attend at least one policy forum on a topic relevant to their writing assignment and post highlights of the forum on CANVAS.

5. All students will develop and present a 5-7 page report on an issue or problem related to teacher education policy and practice in Maryland or at the University of Maryland. During the first seminar, we will explore the dimensions of such a policy or practice and during subsequent seminars we will enable you to share its development and interact with colleagues and faculty. Your presentation will occur during the fourth seminar in December.

Each of these assignments will be discussed more fully in class. All discussion board and paper presentations should be done in APA style.

Attendance: Students enrolled in this course are expected to attend all sessions. University policy excuses the absence of students for illness (self or dependent), religious observances, participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control. Students must request the excuse in writing and supply appropriate documentation.

Accommodation: If you have a documented disability or other learning need and you would like accommodation, please inform the instructors as soon as possible to make the appropriate arrangements.
Participation and Professionalism: Class participation includes student engagement in an on-going discussion of the goals and purposes of teacher preparation and professional development in contemporary society. Students are encouraged to ask questions and to participate in planned and impromptu discussions. Small group discussions will occur at every class meeting and students are expected to participate in them.

Students are expected to honor the code of academic integrity for the University of Maryland (see: http://www.shc.umd.edu) on all matters pertaining to class participation and fulfillment of class expectations. The code stresses the importance of knowing “the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism.”

Grading: Grades of A-D will be awarded based on the following criteria: (1) attendance at all class sessions, (2) presentations and participation in discussions regarding issues raised in class, and (3) completion of reading summaries. All written work will be held to high standards and should conform to proper grammar, usage, punctuation and spelling. All written work must be double-spaced and in no less than 12 point font.

Readings and Other Resource Materials: Participants will be expected to peruse the following as well as readings included in the readings section of CANVAS for this course (items marked with an * are required reading and will be discussed in class)

References:


Easton, J. (2010, May 2). Out of the tower, into the schools: How IES goals will reshape researcher roles. Presidential Invited Address. Annual Meeting of the AERA, Denver, CO.


