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Venture Philanthropy and Teacher Education Policy in the U.S.: The Role of the New Schools Venture Fund

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Background & Purpose: *This article focuses on the growing role of venture philanthropy in shaping policy and practice in teacher education in the United States. Our goal is to bring a greater level of transparency to private influences on public policy and to promote greater discussion and debate in the public arena about alternative solutions to current problems. In this article, we focus on the role of one of the most influential private groups in the United States that invests in education, the New Schools Venture Fund (NSVF), in promoting deregulation and market-based policies.*

Research Design: *We examine the changing role of philanthropy in education and the role of the NSVF in developing and promoting a bill in the U.S. Congress (the GREAT Act) that would create a system throughout the nation of charter teacher and principal preparation programs called academies. In assessing the wisdom of the GREAT Act, we examine the warrant for claims that education schools have failed in their mission to educate teachers well and the corresponding narrative that entrepreneurial programs emanating from the private sector are the solution.*

Conclusions: *We reject both the position that the status quo in teacher education is acceptable (a position held by what we term “defenders”) and the position that the current system needs to be “blown up” and replaced by a market economy (“reformers”). We suggest a third position (“transformers”) that we believe will strengthen the U.S. system of public teacher education and provide everyone’s children with high-quality teachers. We conclude with a call for more trenchant dialogue about the policy options before us and for greater transparency about the ways that private interests are influencing public policy and practice in teacher education.*

In a democratic nation, it is altogether proper that private efforts to reshape public institutions even for the most beneficent purposes be accorded the same hard look that greets any policy proposal. . . . Addressing the implications of these developments requires an informed public conversation that establishes the facts and in turn enables reformers, policymakers, donors, parents, and citizens to grapple with them. Unfortunately, the deliberations today are clouded by ambiguity surrounding even the most elemental facts. (Hess, 2005, pp. 8–9)

This article examines the increasing role of venture philanthropy (Reckhow, 2013; Saltman, 2010; Scott, 2006) and the ideas of educational entrepreneurship and disruptive innovation in influencing the course of federal and state policies and practices in teacher education in the United States.

According to Saltman (2010),

Venture Philanthropy is modeled on venture capital and the investments in the technology boom of the early 1990s. . . . VP treats giving to public schooling as a social investment that, like venture capital, must begin with a business plan, involve quantitative measurement of efficacy, be replicable to be brought to scale and ideally leverage public spending in ways compatible with the strategic donor. . . . One of the most significant aspects of this transformation in educational philanthropy involves the ways that the public and civic purposes of public schooling are redescribed by VP in distinctly private ways. (pp. 2–3)

We focus in particular on one example of these underscrutinized influences on public policy: the influence of the New Schools Venture Fund (NSVF) in supporting policy and programs intended to disrupt the current largely public teacher education system. According to K. Smith and Peterson (2006), “This view holds that the public education system must change so profoundly that only the disruptive force of entrepreneurs who think beyond the current constraints and resources can get us there” (p. 42).

K. Smith and Peterson (2006) defined educational entrepreneurs as

visionary thinkers who create new for-profit or nonprofit organizations from scratch that redefine our sense of what is possible. These organizations stand separate and independent from institutions like public school districts and teachers colleges; as such the entrepreneurs who start them have the potential to spark more dramatic change than might otherwise be created by status quo organizations. (pp. 21–22)

We begin by presenting a framework that we believe describes the major positions that exist today regarding the future of U.S. teacher education (defenders, reformers, transformers) and introduce the narratives of crisis and salvation that underlie reformers' critiques of university teacher education. We then discuss relatively recent changes in the nature and extent of educational philanthropy's role in influencing teacher education policies and practices. Following this analysis of the changing role of philanthropy in teacher education, we present the example of the role of the New Schools Venture Fund, one of most influential venture philanthropy groups in U.S. education, in promoting deregulation and competition in teacher education.

To assess the wisdom of these efforts to further deregulation and the development of a teacher education market economy, we then analyze the broader questions of whether university teacher education has failed in its role in educating the nation's teachers, as reformers have alleged, and whether the entrepreneurial programs that are rapidly being created with funds provided by venture philanthropists represent an improvement over our current situation. In doing so, we examine the ways in which the national study of teacher education conducted by Arthur Levine (2006) has been misrepresented by critics of university teacher education and used as "evidence" that university teacher education has supposedly failed. We also show how other reports on university teacher education that present a more positive view of teacher education by program graduates have been ignored by critics. We conclude with a call for more trenchant dialogue about the options before us and for greater transparency about the ways that private interests are influencing public policy and practice in teacher education.

SITUATING EDUCATIONAL ENTREPRENEURS: STANCES TOWARD THE STATUS QUO IN U.S. TEACHER EDUCATION

From our perspective, there are three major positions taken by those interested in improving the current situation in teacher education in the United States. First, there is the position taken by some college and university teacher educators that the criticisms of teacher education from the outside are wrong and motivated by a selfish desire to make money and/or advance one's personal or professional standing at the expense of students living in poverty who are currently underserved by public schools. We call this the position of the *defenders*. The defenders call for greater investment in the current system of teacher education in order to build greater capacity in the existing institutions that currently prepare teachers (i.e., colleges and universities). The defenders do not see the need for significant changes in the way things are now done.

Second, there are groups of outsiders to the current system, and even some within, who have argued that education schools have failed and that the current system needs to be blown up or disrupted and replaced by an alternative one based on deregulation, competition, and markets. These critics refer to themselves as *reformers*.¹

If history is any guide, it is unlikely that today's colleges of education will substantially reform themselves without substantial competition from other providers. In other words, new entrants to teacher training hold the most promising prospects for redirecting the massive resources now sunk into ineffective teacher education programs. (Rotherham, 2008, p. 112)

Finally, there are those who see the need for substantive transformation in the current system of teacher education but do not support "blowing up" the current system and replacing it with a deregulated market economy. This position is that of the *transformers*.

Those within the transformation camp have sought to improve the quality of teacher education in many ways in recent years, including: (1) developing more shared responsibility for teacher education among schools, universities, and local communities; (2) more effectively connecting coursework in programs to the complexities of the schools for which teachers are being prepared; (3) focusing more intensely on helping teacher candidates learn how to enact teaching practices that will promote student learning; (4) strengthening meaningful accountability systems for teacher candidates and programs; and (5) improving the quality of school and community experiences in teachers' education and the quality of the mentoring that supports these experiences (e.g., Berry et al., 2008; Grossman, 2011; National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education, 2010; Zeichner & Payne, 2013).

A system of categorization like this inevitably oversimplifies a much more complex situation. There is much variation within each of these three camps (e.g., in terms of the intensity and substance of positions) as well as multiple points of overlap between positions (e.g., transformers who, like defenders, support maintaining aspects of the current system). That said, the distinctions between groups offer a meaningful lens for considering differing views on how to move forward in teacher education.

Although the two of us are largely seen by many reformers as defenders of the current system because we are situated in an education school and have been critical of privileging market-based solutions to problems of teacher quality and teacher preparation, we have called for fundamental changes in preservice teacher education and position ourselves within the transformer camp. Our location in this camp reflects our

recognition that an “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) is owed to many students living in poverty who attend U.S. public schools and that improving the quality of teaching and teacher preparation is part of the solution to paying it off. We believe, however, that the quality of teaching, although fundamentally important, is not the major cause of the education debt. We also recognize that there is a need to vastly improve working conditions for educators within public schools and their access to high-quality professional development, to restructure the teaching profession so that first-year teachers do not have the same responsibilities as a 20-year veteran, and to address the roots of poverty and their consequences for student learning.

We also locate ourselves in the transformer camp because we have not been persuaded by the evidence that the entrepreneurial solutions seen by funders and policy makers as the answers to our problems will address the injustices in public schooling. In fact, we believe that the deregulation and disruption of public education and teacher education that are being aggressively promoted by private interests with little public discussion and debate will serve to widen rather than eliminate the opportunity and achievement differences in the quality of education available to children from different backgrounds.

It is clear that there is potentially a lot of money to be made by those who want to replace education schools in teacher preparation; indeed, market advocates sometimes show unembarrassed excitement as public education is privatized. For example, Naveen (2013) recently proclaimed in a *Forbes* magazine article, “I want all entrepreneurs to take notice that [public education] is a multi-hundred billion dollar opportunity that’s ripe for disruption” (p. 1).

Despite the potential to make a lot of money through investment in the disruption and re-creation of the current public education and teacher education systems, and the high degree of confidence, and sometimes blatant arrogance, of some reformers about the superiority of their entrepreneurial ventures, we do not question the motives of those who seek to dismantle the current system of teacher education in the United States and replace it with a deregulated market.² Self-serving behavior, greed, and lack of concern for the common good can be found in all the various camps on educational reform, including in education schools; so too can genuine concern for the common good be found in all camps of the education debates.

Our purpose in writing this article is not to throw stones or impugn the character of those with whom we disagree. Rather, our purpose is to bring a greater level of transparency to the forces influencing public policy in teacher education so that they can be more clearly seen, discussed, and

debated. Discussion and debate of public policy issues is the cornerstone of a healthy democratic society, and we are greatly concerned that many educators and the general public seem to be largely unaware of the ways in which private money and interests are determining the future of teacher preparation in the United States. We are also concerned about the lack of discussion and debate in the public arena of these issues and practices.

Katz (2013) recently noted that in the early part of the 20th century, philanthropists such as Carnegie and Rockefeller encountered a severe backlash for what was perceived to be their efforts to subvert democratic policy making. This same concern now exists as major foundations such as The Walton Family Foundation, The Broad Foundation, and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and groups like the NSVF, employ an aggressive stance and actions in efforts to shape public policy with regard to education and teacher education. Hess (2012) has used the term *muscular philanthropy* to describe the way in which many current venture philanthropists are unapologetically tied to influencing education policies in particular ways to create an environment supportive of their preferred market-based solutions.

BRINGING TEACHER EDUCATION INTO THE STORY OF CRISIS AND SALVATION

Parker (2011) has discussed the dominant narrative that has framed discussion about public schooling for the last 30 years. In this narrative, public schooling is seen as the cause of all our economic, social, and political problems, and educational reform is seen as a panacea for solving them. According to Parker (2011), what we have seen for the last 30 years in the United States is “a stream of disdainful talk and action about public schooling, animated by the belief that public schooling is miserably broken, but also that it is the one thing that can save our society” (p. 413).

As part of locating the blame for our problems and the potential for salvation in public schooling, a discourse of derision is needed to convince policy makers and the public about the failure of the current system. What we have experienced in recent years is the blaming of teachers and their unions, school administrators, and now education schools for the alleged failures of public schooling (Barkan, 2011a). Even though most of the variation in student achievement is related to out-of-school factors like poverty, and related factors such as the lack of access to high-quality early childhood education, health care, nutritious food, and so on (Berliner, 2014; G. Duncan & Murnane, 2012; Rothstein, 2004), reformers often imply that educational interventions alone can fix the inequities in opportunities to learn and in educational outcomes in public schools.

Furthermore, they argue that deregulation and markets, and entrepreneur-led charter schools and teacher education programs are the particular changes that will solve these problems (Ball, 2012).

What Parker (2011) described in relation to public schooling in general can also be seen with regard to teacher education, which, despite all the changes that have taken place in the last 30 years, remains largely a public enterprise in the United States. We hear the constant drumbeat that tells us that education schools, an “industry of mediocrity” (Keller, 2013; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013), have failed to educate the nation’s teachers well and that if we replace this system with deregulation and markets, better teachers will result, and all our problems will be solved. Meredith Liu, a fellow at the Innosight Institute, an organization devoted to promoting “disruptive innovation” in education and health-care, recently asserted,

From a societal perspective, such programs appear to be a questionable investment given the limited evidence that they at least in the aggregate are actually creating effective teachers. . . . Education schools with their high costs and stranglehold on the teacher preparation market are ripe for disruption. (Liu, 2013, pp. 1–2)

This kind of dismissal of the value of teacher education offered by education schools has led to calls for the elimination of the states’ role in monitoring the quality of new teachers in favor of a teacher education market to regulate quality. For example, John Chubb, a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, has argued that policy makers

should end teacher licensure, as we know it. Given the lack of firm knowledge of how best to prepare teachers for the classroom, state policymakers should lift all public school teaching requirements other than a bachelor’s degree and a background check for public school teachers. . . . It makes no sense to require specific forms of training or testing when there is no evidence that those requirements improve teaching. The federal government should lift the highly qualified teacher provisions of the Elementary and Secondary School Act that mandate certification. Schools and school systems should be free to decide what training they want to require. (Chubb, 2012, p. 126)

That John Chubb would advocate for the deregulation of teacher education should be no surprise given his advocacy of choice for K–12 education in the past:

Without being too literal about it, we think reformers would do well to entertain the notion that choice is a panacea. . . . It has the capacity all by itself to bring about the kind of transformation that for years, reformers have been seeking to engineer in a myriad of other ways. (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 217, cited in Rechkow, 2013, p. 22)

Many scholars believe, contrary to Chubb's (2012) assertions, that there is evidence that teacher certification does matter and that we have learned a number of things from research about the characteristics of effective teacher education programs, such as a clear and consistent vision of teaching that is shared across the program, and carefully supervised clinical experience. These scholars believe that the problem is that these characteristics do not exist in every teacher education program (e.g., Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Humphrey, Wechsler, & Hough, 2008; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005).

Clearly, some programs run by universities and by others are weak and have not been improved or shut down under current accountability mechanisms. Rather than "profoundly disrupt" the current system of teacher education because of the uneven quality in programs, transformers seek to independently evaluate and then redesign program accountability systems as recommended in the National Research Council (2010) study of teacher education in the United States and to strengthen the ways in which teacher candidates are assessed before licensure (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2010; Zeichner, 2011).

THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF VENTURE PHILANTHROPY IN U.S. EDUCATION AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Public policy can create new opportunities for entrepreneurs by changing the structure of the market. It can also create opportunities by reallocating resources which usually means an increase or decrease in dollars available and who can access them. (K. Smith & Peterson, 2006, p. 28)

Historically, private foundations and the federal government have invested heavily in improving the design, quality, and content of teaching and teacher education in the United States (e.g., Lagemann, 1992; Suggs & deMarrais, 2011; Sykes & Dibner, 2009; Woodring, 1960). Examples of federal investment in strengthening the college and university system of teacher education include the National Teacher Corps (1965–1981), which focused on preparing teachers to teach in poverty-impacted urban and rural schools (W. Smith, 1980), and the current Teacher Quality Partnership

grants, which fund school and university partnerships in teacher education, including a number of urban teacher residency programs across the country. The Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund are examples of foundations that have invested for many years in stimulating various kinds of innovation in the public system of teacher education. The \$100 million-plus Teachers for a New Era project (2001–2009) led by Carnegie is the most visible recent example of the efforts of foundations to improve the quality of our current teacher education system (Kirby, McCombs, Naftel, & Barney, 2005). Over the years, private foundations have supported a number of the major reports on U.S. teacher education (e.g., Carnegie, 1986; Charters & Waples, 1929; Conant, 1963; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Holmes Group, 1986) and highly visible reform initiatives (e.g., Goodlad, 1994; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future [NCTAF], 1996; Stone, 1968).

Recently, it has become clear that the philanthropic community has turned away from building capacity in the current college and university system of teacher education and toward funding alternative teacher education providers and programs. Reckhow (2012) has described a similar shift in philanthropy in K–12 education since 2000 from funding school districts to directly funding nonprofits and charter schools that compete with school districts.

Major conferences and the national media have been flooded with speeches, papers, and opinion pieces that question the very idea of a college and university system of teacher education (e.g., Hartocollis, 2005; Keller, 2013; Payzant, 2004; Vedder, 2011).³ Levine (2010) has claimed, “There is a growing sense among the critics that it would be more fruitful to replace university-based teacher education than to attempt to reform it” (pp. 21–22). “Frustrated by the apparent resistance of these institutions to change, many funders have turned their attention to alternative pathways to certification. These include support for new organizations focused on recruiting and training teacher candidates and for teacher residency programs” (Suggs & deMarrais, 2011, p. 14).

An example of this can be seen by examining funding for Teach for America (TFA). Between 2000 and 2008, TFA received about \$213 million in foundation grants, which represents 31% of foundation grants during this period to matters related to teachers and teaching (Suggs & deMarrais, 2011). This review noted, “As interest in TFA and other non-traditional programs has increased, funder interest in schools of education as a mechanism for bolstering the supply and quality of teachers has lagged” (Suggs & deMarrais, 2011, p. 35).

Additionally, since 2000, TFA has received over \$200 million in federal funding (usaspending.gov) and has set a goal of raising \$350 million per

year in state funding by 2015 (Simon, 2013). In 2011, the Walton Family Foundation gave TFA \$49.5 million to help double its size (Schiller, 2012) and then gave it another \$20 million in June 2013. Over the last 24 years, the Walton Family Foundation has given more than \$100 million to TFA (Blume, 2013). The 8,200 TFA corps members in 2010–2011 represented less than 1% of the teaching force in the United States that year (Suggs & deMarrais, 2011).

In 1999, a guide for funders interested in improving teacher education prepared for the Kellogg Foundation by the Educational Development Center (EDC) focused exclusively on strengthening university teacher education programs (EDC, 1999). By contrast, a more recent report commissioned by the Ford Foundation (Suggs & deMarrais, 2011), Rotherham's guide for investors who want to help improve teacher and principal quality (Rotherham, 2008), and the actual funding allocations to various kinds of teacher education programs all make clear that disrupting the current system of college and university teacher education to provide room for new entrants to a teacher education market has become today's philanthropists' preferred solution to the alleged ills of the field. For example, Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), an advocacy group that focuses on creating a political environment favorable to market-based solutions in education and critical of teacher unions (Sawchuck, 2012), has stated, "We must encourage and invest in new models and enlist a broader range of expertise to develop and nurture the next generation of educators" (Democrats for Educational Reform, 2011).

Unlike educational philanthropy of the past—*before* the entry into teacher education of individual venture capitalists and large funders like the Gates and Walton Foundations—current educational philanthropy in teacher education has taken a more hands-on approach and openly political role in pushing particular policies through their allocations of funds. This new wave of philanthropy supports policies that create conditions favorable to establishing a teacher education market and room for new entrants to the field (Ball, 2012; Barkan, 2011b; Reckhow, 2013; Saltman, 2010). This new brand of activism by philanthropists in promoting particular policies has managed to shape contemporary debates about teacher education policy and advance particular definitions of what it means to be an educated person, what good teaching is, and what should be involved in judging the quality of a teacher education program.

Specifically, the entrepreneurial community has been able to establish the goal of judging the quality of a teacher education program based on how many of its graduates are able to raise students' standardized test scores at a given moment in time. They have been successful in drawing attention away from questions about the potential costs incurred in doing

so (e.g., narrowing the curriculum in both K–12 and teacher education), how long these graduates stay in teaching, and how well they are able to support student learning in a broader sense beyond test scores.

Quinn, Tompkins-Stange, and Meyerson (2013) argued that developing and enforcing evaluative frameworks to assess the alternative institutional forms their funding helps create is one of the social processes that have been used by philanthropists to elevate and scale up the new entrants to the education field that they fund.

Secretary of Education Duncan’s “Blueprint for Teacher Education” (A. Duncan, 2011) also promotes the idea that the quality of teacher education programs should be judged primarily by the value-added test scores of the students taught by teacher education program graduates. This has been the case despite the substantial concerns raised by assessment experts about the appropriateness of using student test scores to evaluate teachers and teacher education programs (e.g., Economic Policy Institute, 2010; Plecki, Elfers, & Nakamura, 2012; Polikoff & Porter, 2014). The goal of establishing the value-added analysis of the test scores of pupils taught by program graduates as the norm for evaluating the quality of teacher education programs has been furthered by the massive amount of federal money allocated to building state data systems that would make this possible and by the requirements of the ongoing Race to the Top competitions sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (Crowe, 2011).

The history of the role of philanthropy and public policy reveals that foundations have always been key participants in the “politics of knowledge” (Lagemann, 1992) that is associated with the allocation of private funds.

There is nothing especially novel in the subject of foundations and public policymaking, especially when we ask what tactics foundations have had at their disposal in the pursuit of new or changed public policies. They have worked to shape policies by using their influence on boards, by molding elite public opinion, by pursuing campaigns of public information and education, by creating demonstration projects, by using their financial resources strategically to leverage public funds, and by pursuing direct legislative lobbying, judicial strategies, and executive branch persuasion. They have worked at every level of government. (J. A. Smith, 2009)

Despite this role of foundations in advocating particular policies, there has also been a focus over time in philanthropy in the United States on what has been called “scientific philanthropy.” Here, foundations have encouraged the study of problems and the exploration of various solutions, and there was an effort to base the advocacy of particular positions to some

extent on sound scientific evidence (J. A. Smith, 2009; Zunz, 2012). There also has been an emphasis historically on institution building, strengthening the capacity of the public institutions to deliver various services such as education (Gassman, 2012). However, although philanthropy has played a role in education in the United States for many years, the amount of money that is now provided to education is much larger than it has been in the past. Quinn et al. (2013) noted that “the combined asset size of approximately 76,000 grant making foundations in the United States increased from \$272 billion in 1995 to \$625 billion in 2012” (p. 1).

There is a growing concern that the new turn in educational philanthropy toward shifting control of public education institutions to private organizations will narrow the purpose of public education to its economic aspects and ignore the broader civic and political purposes that have historically been a part of our hopes for our public education system (Cuban, 2006; Labaree, 1997; Nelson & Joanes, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). As Saltman (2010) noted, “The commodification of the social world imperils collective public values and collective political agency as well as the public deliberation necessary for democratic governance” (p. 16).

In calling for more democratic deliberation about public policy in education and teacher education, we need to be careful, as Scott (2006) noted, not to romanticize a more traditional public policy-making process “because numerous examples abound of policy maker neglect of poor communities, wasteful public expenditures, and inefficient and ineffective use of educational resources” (p. 128).

The efforts of private foundations to shape public policy in education and teacher education are not new; what is new is the effort to disrupt and dismantle public institutions in favor of a preferred a priori solution of deregulation and markets in the absence of sound empirical evidence that has been subjected to a rigorous vetting process of peer review (Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2006).

Although many of the new “ventures” in public education and teacher education are referred to as nonprofit, they receive generous tax advantages from the public and are able to outsource services to for-profit providers who are often associated with the venture organizations. Saltman (2010) discussed this “circle of privatization” in which public finances are giving control of public institutions to private interests, and public institutions for the poor are controlled more and more by private entities using public funds. Barkan (2013) estimated that “a substantial portion of the wealth—35 percent or more, depending on tax rates—has been diverted from the public treasury, where voters would have determined its use” (p.48).

THE NEW SCHOOLS VENTURE FUND AND THE DISRUPTION OF THE TEACHER EDUCATION MARKET

Well beyond its financial investment, New Schools has helped shape the ideas that brought Relay Graduate School of Education (RGSE) into being and continues to be supportive in creating the field in which we operate, said Norm Atkins, RGSE's Co-founder and President. New Schools funded the charter school movement, and now it's playing a key role in teacher preparation. (NSVF, n.d.-c)

The NSVF was founded and developed in 1998 by social entrepreneur Kim Smith and venture capitalists John Doerr and Brook Byers (Horn & Libby, 2011).⁴ According to its 2012 annual report, NSVF ventures have operated in 331 schools that enroll 130,500 students (83% of whom live in low-income situations). The report also states that 350,00 students have been taught by teachers trained by their ventures, the equivalent of the numbers of students in the largest school districts in the nation. Finally, the report states that it has raised \$248 million since its founding (NSVF, 2012a).

The NSVF has been a major player in the K–12 charter school movement, investing mainly in established charter management organizations that have included ASPIRE, the Achievement Network, KIPP, Match Teacher Residency, Rocketship, Uncommon Schools, and the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), which runs “turnaround schools” in Chicago. The NSVF’s work in “disrupting” K–12 education brought it and its recently departed CEO, Ted Mitchell, acclaim from *Forbes* magazine.⁵ In 2012, *Forbes* named the NSVF one of its top two choices for philanthropically minded donors and put Ted Mitchell on its list of the top 15 “education disruptors.”

Although the NSVF’s role in teacher preparation has been relatively minor to date, it has funded a number of the most visible “early entry” programs in which much of teacher preparation is completed while they are teachers of record (Grossman & Loeb, 2008), including Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, and Relay Graduate School of Education, as well as a residency program for Match charter schools. The NSVF has also funded the Urban Teacher Center, which prepares teachers for charter and public schools in Baltimore and Washington, DC. The goal of the NSVF’s investments has been to promote deregulation and privatization in K–12 teacher and leader education so that there will be room for the new programs it funds.

In teacher education, the NSVF has adopted the mantra that the college and university system needs to be profoundly disrupted. It has promoted

the belief that current teacher education programs create unnecessary barriers to entering the teaching profession by focusing too much on what is viewed as unnecessary educational theory (e.g., Hess, 2009; Matthews, 2010). The teacher education ventures supported by the NSVF have focused on making teacher education more clinically based and preparing teachers for the “gritty realities” of teaching. These schools use an accountability model that requires candidates to demonstrate that they can raise their students’ standardized test scores as a completion benchmark. According to former NSVF staffer Jonathan Schorr (2013),⁶

The new generation of teacher education programs offers new solutions to an old problem and are committed not to fixing ed schools, but to reinventing them. Most emerge not from universities, but from autonomous, typically non-profit organizations. They move the locus for much of their training to the school building, aiming to be more practical and clinical in approach than their traditional forbears. (p. 5)

THE ROLE OF NEW SCHOOLS VENTURE FUND IN THE GREAT ACT

New Schools aims to seed a market of autonomous, outcomes-oriented teacher preparation organizations, and set a new standard for teacher preparation with student learning at the center. . . . Our policy advocacy work supports this effort by advancing public policy that helps to create demand and provide support and funding for performance-based teacher preparation. (NSVF, n.d.-b)

The move to create a vibrant market for high quality teacher training took an important step today. (NSVF, 2012b)

To further the goal of creating a market in teacher education by reducing the role of university teacher education programs, two staff of the NSVF, together with two other reform leaders, helped develop and promote a particular piece of legislation that will potentially have a major impact on the nature of teacher education in the United States. These efforts to disrupt the teacher education market and “create the space for innovation” (NSVF, 2012b) occurred in March 2011. These individuals came together with several sympathetic legislators and their staff in Washington, DC to discuss ways to further the deregulation of teacher education. These four people are: Norm Atkins, the founder of Teacher U/Relay Graduate School of Education; Tim Knowles, the director of the Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago; Julie Mikuta, who

led the Learning to Teach Fund for the NSVF until recently moving to the Schusterman Family Foundation⁷; and Ben Riley, a staffer at the NSVF.

The result of these conversations was a legislative initiative cosponsored by Colorado Senator Michael Bennett (D), Tennessee's Lamar Alexander (R), Maryland's Barbara Mikulski (D), and Mark Kirk (R) of Illinois. This bill, the Growing Excellent Achievement Training Academies for Teachers and Principals Act (GREAT Act), would establish state-based competitive grant programs to create charter teacher and principal preparation programs called *academies* that would be free of many of the state regulations that are used to monitor the quality of teacher education programs. This bill was included as a part of the federal education or No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization in both houses of Congress that was not acted on in the 112th Congress.

On May 23, 2013, the GREAT Act was reintroduced in both the Senate and House of Representatives in the 113th Congress by two bipartisan groups of representatives and senators. The charter teacher preparation programs that would result from the passage of these bills in Congress would be required to prepare teachers to serve in "high needs" areas and hard-to-staff subjects. Additionally, these programs would have the following characteristics: (1) rigorous selection based on the perceived potential to be an effective teacher; (2) hands-on clinical training that will prepare teachers to be effective from their very first day on the job; and (3) a program completion requirement standard that requires candidates to demonstrate their ability to improve student academic achievement.

A key element of the legislation is that states and state authorizers of the charter programs must agree to free these programs of "unnecessary input-based regulations" that currently exist to monitor the quality of teacher preparation programs, including the current requirement in some states that all programs be nationally accredited. Education schools can apply to be classified as charter programs or academies and receive the money that these programs would be granted by states.

The logic here is very similar to the strategy that has been used by the Obama administration in the over \$4 billion Race to the Top (RTT) competition. States will be able to compete for federal funds to support charter teacher academies if they agree to policy conditions that are supportive of the market-driven reforms favored by the administration. According to Crowe (2011), this strategy was very successful in getting states to change their laws in ways that supported a market-based approach, such as allowing nonuniversity programs to operate within their borders. It should be noted that Joanne Weiss, former chief operating officer of the NSVF and the former chief of staff for Secretary of Education Arne Duncan directed the initial RTT competition.⁸

A letter dated June 21, 2011, was circulated to selected groups and individuals across the county to seek endorsements for the GREAT Act. Among its advocates are organizations that have been supportive of the NSVF's agenda and in some cases have received investment funds from the NSVF. These include a number of major charter management organizations, like Green Dot, KIPP, Aspire, and Match; teacher education programs like Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, the Urban Teacher Center, Boston Teacher Residency, Academy for Urban School Leadership, and Relay Graduate School of Education; educational advocacy organizations such as Democrats for Education Reform, Stand for Children, and the Education Trust; and various individuals and units, such as Karen Symms Gallagher, the dean of the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California; the Johns Hopkins School of Education; Jane Hannaway of the Urban Institute; and Jean Claude Brizard, the former CEO of Chicago Public Schools.⁹ The NSVF spent \$102,000 lobbying for charter schools, the GREAT Act, and teacher preparation in 2011 and 2012 (The Center for Responsive Politics, n.d.). It is not clear from the record how much of this money went to support the teacher and principal preparation bill.

It is very clear that the NSVF is seeking to position its current and future ventures in teacher education as the prototypes to be scaled up once the GREAT Act passes and to use these ventures to shut down and/or mold existing university teacher education programs. "The vision is to keep expanding so that in a decade from now, 10,000 teachers in cities around the country are enrolled in an umbrella of Relays" (Caperton & Whitmire, 2012, p. 80).

Jonathan Schorr (2013), a former NSVF staffer, published an article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in which the Relay Graduate School of Education was featured as the future for the field. This and other articles, such as Kronholtz's (2012) piece on Relay in the journal *Education Next*, identified the program as bold and innovative, and Schorr (2013) claimed that Relay "has become the leading symbol of a burgeoning revolution in how America is learning to teach" (p. 2). In a College Board publication, Caperton and Whitmire (2012) asserted that Relay is "a leader in the burgeoning movement to overhaul the way America trains its teachers for work in the highest-need schools" (p. 76). Kronholtz (2012) quoted Arthur Levine, a member of the board of Relay, whose 2006 report on education schools in the United States was quoted by every reformer who declared university teacher education to be a failure, stating, "Relay is the model. . . . It is the future" (p. 2).

Articles proclaiming Relay as bold and innovative have also appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* (Lemov, 2012) and the *New York Times* (Otterman,

2011). These and other articles and a radio broadcast on American RadioWorks (S. Smith, 2013) have appeared, praising the innovativeness of Relay even though even Relay's admirers have conceded that "it's too soon to tell whether the model works" (Kronholtz, 2012, p. 2).

Two reasons are given by most for calling Relay a bold innovative program: (1) its requirement that teachers must demonstrate their ability to increase student achievement on standardized tests in order to complete the program,¹⁰ and (2) its emphasis on what is referred to as "hands on clinical training." No data have been provided about the success of Relay graduates beyond personal testimonials such as:

Many also told me that Relay's lessons have changed their classroom culture. "The culture went from being compliant to being invested," said Max Silverstein, a Penn State business major now teaching in an early childhood classroom at Newark Legacy charter school. I heard the same thing from Alonte Johnson, a Morehouse College English major who is teaching middle school English at Kings Collegiate Center School in Brooklyn. A few days earlier, his students designed a seating chart that paired the better and slower readers. "The environment is more interdependent instead of everyone working for me," he said. (Kronholtz, 2012, p. 6)¹¹

A video presentation of a seminar at the University of Michigan by Brent Maddin, the "provost" of Relay, on the program's development and content¹² does not indicate attention to any existing peer-reviewed research in teacher education in the development of the program and indicates a strong emphasis in the curriculum on ensuring that its teachers master the classroom management strategies compiled by Relay faculty member Doug Lemov (Lemov, 2010). Lemov is also the managing director of Uncommon Schools, one of the three charter school networks involved in the founding of Relay. Otterman (2011) noted that Lemov's work is the backbone of instruction at Teacher U, which evolved into Relay.

Lemov's (2010) strategies are based on his own observations and conversations with teachers and administrators in various charter schools that he claims are high performing. By any reasonable standard, these strategies do not possess the kind of rigorous scientific warrant that is being called for in teacher education curriculum (Pianta, 2011). In fact, there is substantial evidence demonstrating the negative effects on students living in poverty of an obsessive pursuit of higher test scores in "no excuses" environments, such as when the curriculum is stripped down to focus primarily on drill and practice for test taking (Lipman, 2004; McNeil, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Valenzuela, 2005).

You can prep students for a standardized test, get a bump in scores, yet not be providing a very good education. The end result is the replication of a troubling pattern in American schooling: poor kids get an education of skills and routine, a lower tier education, while students in more affluent districts get a robust course of study. (Rose, 2013, p. 13)

Beyond the media blitz promoting Relay, the most obvious effort of the NSVF to position its own ventures to expand and grow as soon as the GREAT Act becomes law has been its announcement of Learning to Teach Entrepreneur in Residence Program (NSVF, n.d.-a) developed in partnership with Teach for America. In this program, which began in the summer of 2013, the NSVF funds two TFA alumni or teams of TFA alumni to spend 6–10 months “laying the groundwork for a new organization that will prepare teachers for schools in low-income communities” (p. 1). The NSVF proudly proclaims that it

is aiming to profoundly disrupt the current teacher preparation market by unleashing talent in growing bold, innovative solutions where the primary focus is on developing new teachers who are able to make student growth of at least one year from their first year as a classroom teacher. (p. 1)

The entrepreneurs will receive assistance from the NSVF and Teach for America in developing their ventures (program models) and will be able to learn

“from other pioneers” (other founders and funders) in the field by spending time with New Schools existing portfolio organizations like the Relay Graduate School of Education, New Teacher Center, the Urban Teacher Center, Match Charter Sposato School of Education/Match Teacher Residency. (p. 1)

Another effort by the NSVF to legitimate its ventures in teacher education and position itself and its ventures to develop and grow in influence in the field is its formation in 2009—with support from the Carnegie Corporation and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and, later, from the Gates Foundation—of a Learning to Teach Community of Practice. This community of practice involves about 40 teacher education programs, including those situated in education schools at Stanford University, the University of Michigan, the University of Southern California, and the University of Washington, and what are referred to as “entrepreneurial” programs such as Relay, the Boston Teacher Residency, the Academy for Urban School Leadership Residency, Match

Teacher Residency, The New Teacher Project, and TFA (NSVF, 2011).

The NSVF has also partnered with the School of Education at the University of Michigan to form TeachingWorks, an organization that brings together entrepreneurial and university programs identified on the TeachingWorks website as “leading innovators across the country who are engaged in major redesign of teacher training and beginning teacher support” (TeachingWorks, n.d.).

TeachingWorks holds regular seminars at the University of Michigan, where leaders of the various member programs present aspects of their works (NSVF, n.d.-d).

Although there is nothing wrong per se with bringing together teacher educators from a variety of different programs to share practices and learn from one another, many entrepreneurial programs are linked to a movement that aims to reduce or eliminate public oversight of teacher preparation and to create a market economy in teacher education in the United States rather than investing in building greater quality and capacity in the now largely public teacher education system. Although both sets of programs share a concern with teaching teachers how to enact teaching practices that, according to alleged evidence, will support desired student learning outcomes, the university and entrepreneurial programs often have very different visions of the role of teacher for which individuals are being prepared and regarding the measures of teaching success. Entrepreneurial programs like Relay are designed in part to prepare teachers for “no excuses” charter and turnaround schools that emphasize increasing student test scores as the major goal.¹³

Conversely, some university programs that are under attack have attempted link the preparation of teachers to supporting teacher candidates’ abilities to enact “high-leverage” teaching practices to teach particular subject matter content and to a broader view of the teaching role. These programs focus on preparing teachers who are able to provide students with access to a rich curriculum that includes a focus on understanding, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge to real-life contexts (Zeichner, 2012). Market-based solutions and the no-excuses schools that are a central part of venture capital and big philanthropy’s approach to educational reform are staffed mostly by those prepared in the entrepreneurial programs and exclusively serve children living in poverty. In these no-excuses, stripped-down versions of schools, there is substantial evidence of the narrowing of the curriculum (Berliner, 2011) and of limiting students’ opportunities to interact with knowledge in meaningful and genuine ways (e.g., Cuban, 2012; Goodman, 2013; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013) by engaging in a “pedagogy of poverty” (Haberman, 1991).

One argument put forth by some faculty in education schools involved

with the NSVF is that getting involved with the group will create potential opportunities to influence members and educate them about the field they seek to transform but often know little about. We believe that this conviction is illusory and that in the end, entrepreneurial programs will benefit from the status of research universities like Stanford, Michigan, and Washington, but that they will allow little influence on their policy agendas. This belief was confirmed by a session at the 2012 New Schools Annual Summit, which attracts funders and reformers from throughout the nation: “Building Better Teachers: How to Start a Teacher Education Program.” This session included participants from several entrepreneurial programs (Aspire, Match, and AUSL teacher residencies and Relay) but not a single university teacher educator, although a number were in attendance.

One thing that the education schools can potentially gain from linking up with the NSVF and programs like the ones it funds is access to some of the enormous amount of money that has accumulated in the entrepreneurial sector. Given the deep cuts that states have made in public universities in recent years and the limited degrees of freedom that education schools have to raise tuition (e.g., Lyall & Sell, 2006; Newfield, 2008), many public education schools have been put in the position of having to find new revenues to replace the lost state support. TeachingWorks’ partnership with the NSVF led to an NSVF investment of \$100,000 in 2012 (NSVF, n.d.-d).

In an *Education Week* article titled “Teacher-Prep Programs Zero in on Effective Practice” (Sawchuck, 2013), several teacher education programs (Match & Boston Teacher Residencies, Relay, and the University of Washington elementary teacher education program) are lumped together because of their common focus on providing strong school-based clinical experiences for teacher candidates. In these programs, teacher candidates learn to enact a set of teaching and classroom management practices that allegedly will help them be successful in the settings for which they are being prepared to teach. These programs accomplish this by repeated practice of these teaching strategies in real classrooms with careful mentoring.

What is not addressed in this article or in the alliance within TeachingWorks of entrepreneurial and university programs are the very different visions of the role of teacher and what is required to teach well.¹⁴ For example, programs like Relay place a strong emphasis on the mastery of Lemov’s (2010, 2012) 49 techniques to become a champion teacher (e.g., “strong voice”). University programs typically situate the acquisition of the ability to enact high-leverage teaching practices within a vision of teachers who understand the communities in which they work and are culturally competent; who have acquired the ability to adapt their teaching to

meet the constantly changing needs of their students; who have learned how to learn in and from their practice to become better at teaching over time; and who have developed an in-depth understanding of content knowledge and pedagogical practices that will promote understanding of this content and of research on learning and development, assessment, how second languages are acquired, and so on. The different ideological agendas with which these programs are associated are also ignored: One set of programs seeks to contribute to strengthening public education while the other aims to deregulate and create market competition in public education and teacher education. Underlying the push by the NSVF and others to deregulate and develop a teacher education market are the narratives that college and university teacher education has failed and that entrepreneur-designed programs are the remedy for this failure.

HAS UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION FAILED, AND IS EDUCATIONAL ENTREPRENEURISM THE ANSWER?

By 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. (A. Duncan, 2009)

America has a broken teacher preparation system. The majority of teachers attest to feeling ill-equipped for the classroom and leave the profession at astonishing rates. (Knowles, 2013, p. 6)

The mantra recited over and over by reformers in the academic literature and popular media that the university teacher education system is broken and needs to be replaced by deregulation and greater competition¹⁵ is based on several major assertions, such as: (a) teacher education programs are not selective in whom they admit; (b) teacher educators spend too much time on theory *at the expense of* the acquisition of practical expertise; (c) teacher educators lack recent teaching experience and are not familiar with the schools for which teachers are being prepared; (d) about half of teachers leave teaching by the end of 5 years; and (e) universities do not adequately support their teacher education programs (e.g., Knowles, 2013; Kronholtz, 2012; Levine, 2011).

The reform literature rarely cites any of the major peer-reviewed studies of the field sponsored by such groups as the National Research Council, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Academy of Education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; National Research Council, 2010).¹⁶ In almost every indictment of the current system of teacher education, critics

cite Arthur Levine's (2006) study of teacher education programs within education schools.

ARTHUR LEVINE'S STUDY OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN EDUCATION SCHOOLS

Several aspects of Levine's (2006) report should be noted in light of the extensive reference to it by critics of university teacher education who advocate for deregulation and a teacher education market. First is the lack of any evidence of the simplest test of rigor: independent peer review. Although there are elements of truth revealed in this report about weaknesses in some teacher education programs, there are a number of instances in which inadequately substantiated assertions are made that highlight the negative and, in some cases, either overstate a point or are clearly inaccurate. Take, for example, the inaccurate assertion in a statement about the alleged lack of attention to clinical experience in teacher education programs: "Students have limited clinical or fieldwork experience today in most teacher education programs; it consists only of the short time spent student teaching" (p. 39).¹⁷

Although this statement may have been true in the 1960s and 1970s, most states have formulated regulations over the last 30 years that require not only student teaching but also additional pre-student teaching clinical experiences. For example, according to the database compiled by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (www.nasdec.net), 38 states require observation and clinical experiences prior to student teaching, and 36 states require at least 10 weeks of student teaching.

These data are confirmed by a recent report by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2013) that includes survey responses from 95% of its 800 institutional members. With regard to the issue of how pervasive clinical experiences are in university-sponsored teacher education programs, the report stated,

Virtually all programs require supervised student teaching or an internship for graduation, although the required duration varies: The average bachelor's-level clinical requirement ranges from 500 to 562 total clock hours (mean = 14.50 weeks); the average master's-level clinical requirement ranges from 480 to 586 total clock hours (mean = 14.52 weeks). Preparation programs also require students to participate in early field experiences: The average bachelor's-level requirement ranges from 114 to 189 clock hours; the average master's-level requirement ranges from 111 to 164 clock hours. (p. 9)

A second aspect of Levine's (2006) report centers on his extreme and unsupported comments in various places that would never survive a rigorous peer-review process. For example, he asserted, "Most universities, after a barrage of reports over the past two decades on the need to strengthen teacher education did little or nothing" (p. 22).

Levine also attempted, without any grounds for doing so, to tie the alleged lack of clinical experience in programs to program graduates' dissatisfaction with their preparation programs. One element of this study was a series of surveys of university teacher education faculty, deans of education schools, graduates of university teacher education programs, and principals. Citing these surveys,¹⁸ Levine noted,

Alumni who were critical of their teacher education programs often pointed to the price they paid later for their limited practical experience. As one of them put it, "I do not feel that I was prepared for the realities of life in a school or classroom as a teacher." (p. 41)

Another graduate is cited in the following excerpt:

"I could talk about Carl Jung, scaffolding, cooperative learning groups (and) the advantages of constructivism," but [the graduate] had no idea about what to do when "Johnny goes nuts in the back of the class, or when Lisa comes in abused, or when Sue hasn't eaten in three days." (p. x)

Reformers have frequently cited Levine's (2006) study as evidence that university teacher education graduates feel unprepared to teach. For example, Schorr (2013) noted, "In a seminal 2006 study by Arthur Levine, more than three in five teachers said their training left them unprepared for the classroom and principals agreed" (p. 3).

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2009) also referred to Levine's (2006) surveys in his address at Teachers College, Columbia University:

As you know, the most recent comprehensive study of teacher education was carried out by Arthur Levine, President of Teachers College. . . . More than 3 in 5 Ed school alums surveyed for the Levine report said that their training did not prepare them adequately for their work in the classroom. (p. 3)

Finally, when the GREAT Act was reintroduced to the Senate and House of Representatives on May 23, 2013, both Michael Bennett (CO-D) in the Senate and Tom Petri (WI-R) in the House referred to the Levine (2006) study to help make their case for the bill. No other study or report was referred to in either presentation.

A leading study of 28 teacher training programs revealed that more than 60 percent of alumni said that they were not adequately prepared for the classroom.¹⁹

According to a leading study 61 percent of Ed school alumni reported that schools of education at four-year colleges did not adequately prepare their graduates for the classroom.²⁰

Although the surveys in Levine's (2006) study identified some of the problems in teacher education that have been discussed in the literature for many years, it is not the only survey that has been conducted on teachers' assessments of their preparation programs. Although some of the more recent surveys also show that teachers have problems with aspects of their preparation, they also present a more positive picture than Levine's surveys. For example, a recent survey of 500 beginning teachers in the first 3 years of their careers commissioned by the American Federation of Teachers (2012), an organization that has been critical of the status quo in teacher education (American Federation of Teachers, 2012), found that "Two-thirds (66 percent) of new teachers felt completely (19 percent) or mostly (47 percent) prepared when they first started teaching while 34 percent said they felt just somewhat prepared or not prepared at all" (p. 21). This study also found that "Teachers who completed an alternative training or certification program recall feeling less prepared (only 42 percent felt completely or mostly prepared) than teachers who followed the traditional path" (p. 22).

Several other surveys of teachers that asked them to evaluate the quality of their preparation programs also show a more positive portrait of university teacher education programs than Levine's surveys, including: (a) Eduventures' (2009) study of 1,504 teachers with 5 years or less in the field, which indicated that 78% of teachers felt well prepared when they entered the field; (b) the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and Public Agenda surveys of 641 first-year teachers conducted in the spring of 2007, which indicated that 80% of teachers felt very or somewhat prepared for teaching in their first year (Public Agenda, 2008); and (c) a 2011 survey of 2,500 randomly selected K-12 public school teachers, which found that 65% of teachers rated their preparation program as excellent or very good, and another 24% rated it as good (Feistritz, Griffin, & Linnajarvi, 2011).

All these surveys reveal some teacher dissatisfaction with the quality of their preparation for teaching, and none of them was independently peer reviewed. The question should be asked as to why critics of university education schools and advocates for deregulation and markets continue to cite only Levine's (2006) study and additionally only report the negative

aspects of Levine's findings while ignoring the positive findings about university teacher preparation in his study and similar ones.

Despite the negative assertions made by Levine about the satisfaction of teacher education program graduates with the quality of their preparation programs, there are a number of places in the report where he noted excellence in university teacher education and noted the limited amount of responsibility that can reasonably be placed on education schools alone for the problems in public education. For example,

It is critical to recognize that weaknesses in teacher education are not the primary reason we do not have more and better teaching. Schools and government bear a larger responsibility for low salaries . . . for an absence of teacher induction programs, low hiring standards, and poor working conditions which cause high teacher turnover. (p. 21)

Despite these moments of more nuanced analysis, the overwhelming focus in public accounts of the report is on what are seen as negative aspects of teacher education. This negativity was picked up by the media reports of the study soon after its release, as evidenced in headlines such as, "Study Says Teacher Training is Chaotic" (Feller, 2006), "Prominent Teacher Educator Assails Field" (Honawar, 2006), "Report Critical of Training of Teachers" (Finder, 2006), and "No Teacher Left Behind" (2006).

THEORY VS. PRACTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

One major aspect of the critique of the role of universities in educating teachers is the construction of stereotypes about the nature of these programs, in which they are seen as emphasizing theory *at the expense of* preparation in effective teaching practices. Caperton and Whitmire's (2013) discussion of what they saw as the positive aspects of the Relay Graduate School of Education's teacher preparation program clearly reveals this caricature of university teacher education:

Gone are the courses on education theory and history with no practical bearing. . . . Professors are not lofty academics, they are accomplished practitioners in the field. (p. 77)

Relay provost Brent Maddin said "the key is not to weed out theory, but rather to distill it down to essential points for the extremely busy teacher." (p. 83)

The image of university teacher preparation presented in the reform literature is of preparation programs with instructors who have not been teachers for many years and who are out of touch with the complexities of

today's public schools. In contrast, the reform-oriented teacher education programs like Relay are portrayed as intensely focused on drilling teachers in the mastery of particular teaching and classroom management practices. For example, a class at Relay was described as follows:

The classroom lessons are heavily scripted. During the first three minutes of the Engaging Everybody class, for example, the Relay students are to report on how often they're using the four techniques. The script then lists four paragraphs of narrative and questions for the Relay professor to pose over the next four minutes. For five minutes after that, there's a review, with 10 questions for the professor to ask, and then a suggested transition: "All right, our minds are fresh on today's content and we're ready to move." Then there's a guided 7-minute guided "table discussion," 5 minutes of classroom discussion, 11 minutes of partner feedback, and so on. (Kronholz, 2012, p. 4)

The caricature of university teacher education programs common in the reform literature ignores the growing presence of teachers and former teachers with recent experience who have assumed instructional and coaching roles in teacher education programs (Zeichner, 2010), the shift over the last two decades to conducting more teacher preparation in schools, and the shift over many years toward a competency and standards- or practice-based approach that focuses on the acquisition of particular teaching strategies (Zeichner, 2005, 2012).

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CRITIQUE OF ED SCHOOLS?

The peer-reviewed literature on teacher education shows variable quality in the preparation of teachers. Although there is some truth to the criticisms of the reformers, their analyses greatly oversimplify a much more complex situation.

To hold teacher education up as solely responsible for the problem of teacher quality and retention in urban schools, as much of the reform literature and the introduction of the GREAT Act in the 113th Congress have done, ignores a substantial amount of evidence that ties, for example, teachers' learning and attrition to the conditions in their workplace (e.g., Ingersoll, 2003; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). To only look at which teachers can raise standardized test scores at a given moment in time, and to ignore the in-service realities and problems with retaining teachers, as well as variation in different communities' access to experienced teachers, flies in the face of research that has documented the relevance of teachers' working conditions and teacher experience to student learning

(Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013) and the high cost of teacher turnover (NCTAF, 2007). Even advocates of deregulation like John Chubb acknowledge the benefits of research demonstrating the importance of teacher experience when they make statements like the following: “research is very clear that teachers become more effective in raising student achievement with classroom experience” (p. 66).

Those who criticize the academic qualifications of the graduates of university teacher education programs ignore the evidence that shows the improvements made over time in the academic competence of teacher education students/teachers (Goldhaber & Walch, 2013), particularly at the secondary level (e.g., Gitomer, 2007). Such comparisons also ignore the challenges posed by the size of the teaching force in the United States (about 3.6 million) versus other countries like Finland and Singapore, with small teaching forces that only admit individuals from among their top secondary school graduates to teacher education programs (Tucker, 2011). Although there are clearly problems in some programs with regard to the academic qualifications of teacher candidates (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005), a general indictment of university teacher education in this regard seems unwarranted. Finally, to indict teacher educators in university programs as being uniformly out of touch with current classroom conditions ignores the growing presence of hybrid roles in teacher education that have engaged more practicing teachers in instruction in university preparation programs (Zeichner, 2010; Zeichner & Bier, 2013).

Advocates of disrupting the teacher education system frequently call for only admitting individuals from the top tiers of secondary school performance to teacher education, and they point to the strong academic caliber of the TFA and other early-entry program recruits who mostly do not continue in teaching beyond the first few years (Donaldson & Moore Johnson, 2011). They claim that it is possible for us to staff our nation’s schools with academically stronger individuals if we increase our reliance on these programs that encourage individuals to teach only for a few years.

Although it may be less expensive in the short run to depend on a teaching force with a larger percentage of inexpensive and temporary teachers to be replaced when they leave with similar teachers, using this as a strategy for improving teacher quality is problematic given the research on the negative effects of teacher attrition on student learning (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). This strategy becomes even more problematic when we consider that these short-term teachers work almost exclusively in schools attended by urban and rural students in communities greatly impacted by poverty (Peske & Haycock, 2006).

It is clear that there is a need for much improvement in the college and university system of teacher education and that state program approval

and national program accreditation have failed to improve or eliminate some weak programs (National Research Council, 2010). The need to improve the system does not mean that many improvements have not been and are not currently being made and that the solution is to turn the job of preparing teachers over to the private sector.

ARE ENTREPRENEUR-DESIGNED PROGRAMS THE SOLUTION?

On the other side, the claims about the superiority of the programs like Relay that have been funded by venture philanthropy over university programs are based on an acceptance of the claim that these programs have proven success at producing graduates who have demonstrated the ability to raise the standardized test scores of their pupils at least a year. Advocates also sometimes point to some evidence that standardized test scores have gone up, and more students than before have gone to college in the charter schools where teachers prepared by the entrepreneurial programs have taught.

The educational entrepreneurs who are brought in by venture philanthropists to develop and run start-up teacher education programs are referred to in glowing terms in the literature on educational entrepreneurship. For example, Hess (2006) referred to them as “pioneers,” “visionary thinkers,” “the engines of progress,” “imaginative, creative and talented,” and these assertions are taken at face value in calls to deregulate and create a market economy in U.S. teacher education.²¹

The dearth of research demonstrating the superiority of entrepreneurial programs supported by the NSVF like Relay, Match Teacher Residency, and the Urban Teaching Center in the preparation of teachers, even by their own standard of quality based in student standardized test scores, raises serious questions about the warrant for these claims. Saying over and over again that these programs are innovative, groundbreaking, and bold does not make it true in the absence of solid research evidence. It is ironic that college and university teacher education is criticized for not being able to put forth evidence demonstrating the efficacy of its programs, when those who engage in these criticisms are unable to do so themselves.

Even in some cases in which it can be shown that students in charter schools staffed by graduates of these entrepreneurial programs have improved test score results and graduation rates, it has not been demonstrated that the nature and quality of the teacher education programs have been responsible for these gains (see Zeichner & Conklin, 2005, for a discussion of this issue). Although the evidence shows that some charters have outperformed public schools in raising standardized test scores, most of them have not done so (CREDO, 2009, 2013).

Further concerns are raised about the ethics of this approach when we read statements like the following in the literature on educational entrepreneurship:

The expectation is not that the typical venture will improve upon the status quo, only that some will do so. Some ideas won't pan out and many will fail. (Hess, 2006, p. 3)

Both philanthropists and the broader public must accept that it is ok for investments to fail, so long as the failure is in pursuit of results-oriented solutions. (Hess, 2006, p. 253)

We must not forget that these entrepreneurial solutions for the ills of teacher education have direct consequences exclusively for children living in poverty and not for the children of the entrepreneurs and middle- and upper-middle-class children generally. This situation has negative consequences for the quality of the society as well, given the consequences of creating a stripped-down and inferior set of schools for many students living in poverty. We are comfortable in asserting that very few, if any, entrepreneurs and other advocates for teacher education programs like Relay send their own children and grandchildren to the schools that they refer to as tremendously innovative, schools that are staffed by teachers who enter teaching through these entrepreneurial programs. Henig, Hula, Orr, and Pedescleaux's (2001) study of school reform in Baltimore, Detroit, and Atlanta supports this assertion. We do not think it is acceptable to use the children who can least afford to experience diminished opportunities for access to a rich learning experience in schools as guinea pigs for the entrepreneurial revolution in teacher education.

THE UNCRITICAL REPRODUCTION OF THE NARRATIVE OF DERISION AND SALVATION THROUGH ENTREPRENEURISM BY THE MEDIA

In addition to the uncritical promotion of entrepreneurial teacher education programs like Relay described earlier, the local and national media have taken up, largely in an uncritical way, the narrative about the failure of university teacher education that is being promoted by groups like the New Schools Venture Fund and Democrats for Education Reform—groups that are shaping teacher education policy in the Obama administration and in the current Congress. For example, on October 7, 2011, the *Seattle Times* lead editorial "Refocusing the Teacher Quality Debate" praised the main element in Duncan's plan for teacher education accountability that requires the value-added evaluation of teacher education institutions, and then reprinted the following comment made by a teacher educator in a forum in Washington D.C. sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute.

This quote was probably taken by the *Seattle Times* from the Democrats for Education Reform white paper *Ticket to Teach* or from the inclusion of the quote in articles in the *New York Times* and *U.S. News and World Report*.²²

A growing chorus of critics, including prominent education professors, are amplifying concerns about weaknesses in teacher-prep programs. The director of teacher education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education was quoted on a *New York Times* online forum as saying that of the nation's 1,300 graduate teacher training programs only about 100 were doing a competent job. The rest could be shut down tomorrow, said Harvard's Kay Merseth. (p. A13)

This type of derogatory depiction of university teacher education programs has been repeated over and over again in local newspapers around the country. It does not seem to matter that there are not 1,300 graduate teacher education programs in the country or that Arne Duncan's (2011) assertion in his blueprint for teacher education that "only 50 percent of current teacher candidates received supervised clinical training" (p. 5) was inaccurate. It seems that people can say whatever they want or call things whatever they want, and their assertions are taken at face value. When the National Council on Teacher Quality issues a report on university-based teacher education, it is covered by the national media (e.g., Levin, 2011) as if it has been vetted through an independent peer review process. It does not seem to matter that these reports have not been reviewed independently.

CONCLUSION

The future of the public system of teacher education in the United States is in doubt as the movement to deregulate and privatize the preparation of teachers gains resources, policy support, and momentum. Teaching and learning are clearly not at acceptable levels in all U.S. public schools given the undeniable existence of the "education debt" that continues to affect many students living in poverty. In addition, even though some university teacher education programs have been long committed to self-improvement and have been engaged in high-quality preparation for many years (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2006), overall, things are not okay in the world of business as usual in teacher education. Although there is no disagreement that both public schooling and teacher education need to be greatly improved, we disagree with advocates of deregulation and privatization in teacher education about the causes of our problems, whether university teacher education programs have been changing and improving, and how to address the problems.

There is no evidence in our view that the entrepreneurial teacher education programs that have been touted as the future of teacher education are the bold, innovative, and pioneering entities that they are claimed to be. Merely requiring teachers to demonstrate their ability to raise standardized test scores to complete a program is not the kind of measure of teaching performance that we should use to assess the readiness of teachers to be successful in the classroom. There are other, more meaningful ways to assess the performance of teachers, including attention to teacher performance and student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky, & Ahn, 2013; Zeichner, 2011). Just because we hear endlessly that these entrepreneurial programs are revolutionary does not make them so. The programs themselves are too new to have long-term retention data or data about the quality of graduates' teaching over time.

Reducing the measure of success in schooling to how much standardized test scores can be raised at a given moment in time or even over the 3-year minimum period required for sound value-added analysis, only for students living in poverty, while we continue to seek a richer and broader education in the arts, humanities, critical thinking, and so on for middle-class children is ethically unacceptable.²³

One of the biggest flaws in the arguments of advocates for deregulation and privatization in teacher education is their claim, implicit or otherwise, that educational interventions alone can address our education debt and the serious differences in opportunities to interact with knowledge in school in meaningful ways that exist for students of different backgrounds. Although improvements in teaching, schooling, and teacher education are a part of the solution, we must also address the numerous consequences of poverty for many students in our public education system. Without doing this, any solution to our educational problems will fall short of success (Carter & Welner, 2013; Noguera, 2011).

We are on a course to dismantle and replace the college and university system of teacher education in the United States that continues to prepare most of the nation's teachers. This would be a serious mistake in our view. Among countries that have performed strongly on international comparisons of student achievement, none has a free-market system of teacher education, nor have any of these nations utilized the kind of deregulation and privatization that is being put into place in the United States. On the contrary, a strong university system of teacher education is a prerequisite for a strong system of public schooling in most high-performing countries (Darling-Hammond & Liebermann, 2012).

Advocates of deregulation and markets frequently complain about the high cost of university teacher education and the waste of public resources. Most of the federal contributions to teacher education in public

universities are in financial aid to students and not in funds to develop innovation in programs. For example, Arne Duncan (2009) has stated that “all told, the federal government provides \$4 billion a year in Pell grants and federal loans to support students and our university teacher education programs” (p. 2). Over the last decade or more, there have been severe cuts in the state contributions to our public universities that have undermined efforts to innovate in teacher education programs and make them more connected and responsive to the needs of public schools (Newfield, 2008).

The Obama administration, which has largely been supportive of deregulation and developing a free market in teacher education, has taken an ironic stance by calling for lowering of standards in federal rules for the preparation of teachers while calling for raising standards for K–12 pupils through its advocacy of the new Common Core Curriculum.

We agree with Welner (2011), who has argued that

educational opportunities should be one of our most precious public goods. While public education does provide important private benefits to children and their families, it also lies at the center of our societal well-being. Educational opportunities should therefore never be distributed by market forces because markets exist to create inequalities—they thrive by creating winner and losers. (p. 40)

As an alternative to the market-based solutions to problems of teacher education that we criticize in this article, we have suggested here and elaborated elsewhere elements of what we have referred to here as a transformation agenda for teacher education. We believe, based both on empirical research (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) and a belief in a strong public sector, that these changes will better address the enduring the problems of the field and will be more likely than market-based approaches to provide a high-quality education and teachers for everyone’s children (Zeichner, 2009, 2010; Zeichner & Payne, 2013; Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, in press).

These strategies build on the work of John Goodlad and many others who have worked for many years for significant transformation of teacher education in the United States (Goodlad, 1991). They emphasize: (a) more shared responsibility for preparing teachers among universities or other program operators, schools, and local communities; (b) situating the process of learning to teach more strongly in relation to the kinds of settings for which individuals are being prepared to teach, while preparing teachers with content and professional knowledge as well as knowledge of and commitment to the communities in which they work; (c)

focusing on preparing teachers to be able to enact teaching practices that evidence suggests will help provide opportunities for students to interact with knowledge in authentic ways and develop understanding; and (d) strengthening accountability systems for teacher education programs in ways that involve the assessment of teachers' abilities to promote student learning beyond their ability to raise standardized test scores.

Finally, and most important, it is crucial that the agendas and activities of venture philanthropists like those connected to the New Schools Venture Fund and their partnerships with those working in higher education be more visible to the public and scholarly communities in education so their assertions and claims can be given the same scrutiny and critique that any other set of proposals deserves in a democratic society. This is particularly important when the proposals involve the shifting of the control of the largely public system of teacher education to private entities.

Since the beginnings of philanthropy in the United States, there has always been public skepticism about its possible negative effects on democratic deliberation about public policy.

At no time in American history—not even now, when private wealth and its creators are so effusively celebrated—have these nonprofit institutions been unshadowed by public skepticism and distrust. Inevitable, private initiatives in the public interest, whether promoted by wealthy individuals or by groups of citizens in support of causes that do not command majority support, are—and always have been—problematic among people with a foundational commitment to democratic governance and principles of equality. (Hall, 2013, p. 139)

Although he is a strong supporter of market-based approaches to education reform, Hess (2012) of the American Enterprise Institute has called for a new level of civic responsibility and willingness to embrace criticism and feedback with regard to philanthropic efforts to improve education. He criticizes the lack of openness to dialogue and criticism among the major foundations that have been steering education policy and reform and concluded,

Hard-hitting public exchanges—not private confabs—are the most effective forums for surfacing overlooked challenges, informing courses of action, or reframing the context in which decisions are made. The groups convened by foundations tend to include, naturally enough, friends, allies, and grantees. These aren't the folks likely to offer a fresh take on strategy or to challenge comfortable assumptions—especially given the sensible

disinclination of grantees to offend benefactors or of reformers to offend the engine funding their cause. (p. 5)

In addition to the invitation-only annual summits sponsored by the NSVF and similar gatherings sponsored by other entrepreneurial groups and by university teacher education organizations, we all should be seeking actively and with great humility to support a genuine public dialogue about the wisdom of applying market-based and other solutions to the problems of teacher education. Given the size of the U.S. teaching force, at over 3.5 million, it is unlikely that any system of teacher education can be developed that does not include significant involvement of the nation's colleges and universities. The problems of public education and teacher education are too important to be permitted to operate without rigorous vetting of claims about innovative practices and a trenchant public dialogue.

NOTES

1. The reformers often refer to teacher education as “teacher training.” Teacher education is also referred to in this community as a component of “human capital development” (Corcoran, 2009) or “strategic talent management” (Odden, 2013).

2. According to K. Smith and Peterson (2006), “It is important to understand that entrepreneurs have a vision for a better way of doing things; thinking beyond the constraints of current rules and resources” (p. 22).

3. Also see this video clip from the 2013 meeting of Jeb Bush’s Foundation for Excellence in Education on “revolutionizing America’s teacher preparation programs”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Odt_I3RUVW0

4. Kim Smith, along with another key former NSVF staffer, Jonathan Schorr, was also part of the founding team of Teach for America.

5. Mitchell has recently been confirmed to become the Undersecretary of Education in the U.S. Department of Education, a job that makes him the official in the U.S. government responsible for overseeing higher education.

6. Schorr has joined the communications team in the U.S. Department of Education.

7. Julie Mikuta is also a former TFA teacher, vice president for alumni affairs for TFA, and the former chair of the board of the education advocacy group Stand for Children.

8. James Shelton, a former NSVF and Gates Foundation staffer, directed the Office of Innovation and Improvement, the entity that runs the other major Education Department competition, the Innovation in Education Grants. Shelton is currently the Acting Deputy U.S. Secretary of Education.

9. Julie Mikuta, formerly a key member of the NSVF and one of the key players in pushing the GREAT Act was a visiting Fellow at Johns Hopkins Education School in 2011. This School of Education, which did not publically support the original bill, signed on in support of the bill after Mikuta’s time at Hopkins.

10. All the teachers in Relay are teachers of record fully responsible for classrooms, and although they are classified by federal law as “highly qualified,” they are uncertified; see <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/08/27/how-the-public-is-deceived-about-highly-qualified-teachers/>).

11. After our search of the literature for studies on the impact and effectiveness of the program did not turn up any studies, we confirmed on 5/8/13 with Relay’s research director Billie Gastic that there was no existing research on the impact of the program at that time.

12. See <http://www.teachingworks.org/training/seminar-series/event/detail/relay-graduate-school-of-education>

13. See Goodman (2013) for an example of some negative consequences of an extreme emphasis on raising test scores rather than a broader focus on learning.

14. Also see this NSVF-produced video on “performance based” teacher education. <http://vimeo.com/74750074>

15. NSVF staffer Ben Riley referred to teacher education as “the most retrograde sector of education” in his remarks to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in February 2013 (<http://www.aacte.org>).

16. One exception to this is in a July 24, 2012, hearing on alternative teacher certification in the House Education and Workforce Committee, in which reference was made twice to an AERA peer-reviewed synthesis of the research on alternative pathways to teaching (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005). In these references to this review by the chair of the committee and one of the witnesses who was asked to testify, the review was inaccurately portrayed as concluding that there is no difference in the competence of teachers prepared in traditional university programs and alternative programs. In fact, one of the main conclusions of the review was that the poor quality of much of the peer-reviewed research prevented definitive conclusions about the efficacy of pathways into teaching (Education and the Workforce Committee, 2012).

17. Duncan (2011) went further in misrepresenting the reality in university teacher education by asserting, “Only 50 percent of current teacher candidates receive supervised clinical training” (p. 5).

18. It is not clear from the information that Levine made publicly available whether those who actually responded to the surveys—53% of the deans, 40% of the faculty, and 34% of alumni—were representative of the population surveyed. No claims were made about the representativeness of the sample of principals. In addition, inadequate information was provided about how the specific data collected in the case studies were gathered and how the examples from the case studies cited in the report were warranted by these data.

19. <http://www.bennet.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/bennet-introduces-bipartisan-bill-to-create-academies-that-prepare-great-teachers-and-principals>

20. See <http://petri.house.gov/press-release/petri-polis-introduce-bipartisan-bill-improve-teacher-and-principal-preparation>

21. See this brief video of NSVF staffer Julie Mikuta talking about the transformation of teacher education by increasing entrepreneurial programs: <http://vimeo.com/74750074>

22. See <http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/education-degrees-and-teachers-pay/> and <http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/on-education/2009/03/25/what-you-should-consider-before-education-graduate-school>

23. This same ethical argument was made in the latter part of the 19th century with regard to philanthropic efforts to support the Hampton-Tuskegee program of industrial training for Blacks in the United States (Anderson, 1988).

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