TE982: Policy Issues in Teacher Education

Spring 2008

Tuesday 4:10-7:00
111 Erickson Hall

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This version of TE982 is intended for doctoral students in education, particularly those with interests in policies related to teacher education. The readings in the course will be a mixture of scholarly papers about teacher education policy (or more general versions of policy tools used for teacher education), publications written to advocate for some teacher education policy, or policy documents themselves (e.g., legislation or regulations linked to teacher education). What counts as a “teacher education policy” will be construed broadly, to include policies about recruitment of prospective teachers as well as policies determining the structure and substance of teacher education programs. “Policy” itself will also be construed broadly, to include the actions non-governmental actors take to influence the shape of teacher education (e.g., the efforts of ExxonMobil to shape the preparation of mathematics and science teachers) and the efforts associations of teacher education institutions themselves (e.g., the Holmes Group) to agree on policies.

The course will be conducted as a seminar. Students are expected to complete assigned readings before coming class. For some classes, focal questions will be distributed prior to class. Students should also take notes about ideas or passages in the text that they believe would be productive focal points for seminar discussion. (Please make notes on the particular pages and passages deserving discussion.) Discussions will address the theoretical framework(s) guiding research, the particular questions studies address, the methods used to seek answers to those questions, the chains of reasoning from evidence to conclusions, and the ideas for practice, policy, and further research that studies suggest.

Toward the end of the course, class time will be devoted to student presentations and discussion.

By the end of the course, students should be familiar with the major areas of policy related to teacher education, including the arguments for and against key policies, the range of policies currently in existence, and the evidence (or lack thereof) about the effectiveness of the policy. Students will also have pursued some area in depth, either by mastering the literature related to a particular policy or by gaining an understanding of the full range of teacher education policies operating in a geographic context (US state or another country), so that they could engage in discussions of those policies in professional settings or design research connected to that policy or policy context.
Readings

Most required readings will be available on the course Angel site, either as pdf files or as links to articles through the MSU library. A few hard copy texts will be required for sessions later in the course. Information needed to purchase those texts will be provided well in advance. A tentative list of readings for the first few weeks is provided below in this syllabus. Selection of additional or substitute readings will be based in part on the course of class discussions.

Course assignments

1. Critical response to class readings

Three times during the first 12 course sessions, students will prepare a 750-1000 word critical response to the readings. By “critical response,” I mean that a short essay that goes beyond simple summary of the readings to address some substantive issue linked to the readings. Students might, for example, discuss the chain of argument linking evidence to conclusions. Or students might discuss the possible consequences of a policy that are not brought up in a paper promoting a particular policy direction. The task of writing this critical response resembles that of responding to a paper at a conference, both addressing strengths and weaknesses in the work and helping the audience (in this case, other seminar participants) connect the paper to other scholarship.

Students should come to class prepared to present the gist of their critical responses to the seminar group.

2. Written project

Students are required to prepare one written project of 5,000 to 7,000 words. The project may either take the form of either a review article about the literature (including, but not restricted to, research studies or a policy analysis of the set of teacher education policies operating in a US state or in another country. The style of the paper should conform to the APA publication manual.

Students choosing to write a review article should focus on some particular direction for teacher education policy. The review article should:

- make an argument for the policy direction’s importance in the current political climate
- describe the process used to identify the literature included in the review
- provide a summary (in text or table) of each article included in the review
- include an analytic discussion that includes some of the student’s own thinking, rather than simply listing the results of the individual articles
Students choosing to write an analysis of a teacher education policy context should prepare an analysis that:

- sketches the general background of the state or county, including information such as the number of teacher preparation institutions, the approximate number of new teachers prepared each year, and current requirements for teacher certification
- describes each of the teacher preparation policies currently operating in the context
- provides an analysis of the likely effects of the configuration of policies
- offers recommendations for policy changes that would be likely to lead to better outcomes, with accompanying rationales

To allow to opportunities for instructor feedback, students should turn in two interim products:

- 100 word abstract, describing the area for review or policy analysis, due at Class 4 (January 29)
- 250 word progress report, giving more detail about the area for review or research questions/methods, due at Class 8 (February 26)

3. Project presentation and response

**Paper presentation.** During the last two weeks of the seminar, each student will make a 15-20 minute presentation of his course project, be it literature review or policy analysis. Following the response (by another student), the author will comment on points raised in that response, either defending the project against criticisms raised or explaining how it could be modified to address the criticisms. The author should also respond to comments and criticisms made by other seminar members. The presenter must provide the respondent with a written text or detailed set of talking points at least one week prior to the presentation.

**Presentation of response.** Each student will serve as a respondent to a student seminar presentation. Respondents may either write out their response (and read it to the seminar) or speak from an outline. A copy of the text or outline should be given to the instructor immediately following the presentation.

**Evaluation**

Course grades will be based on the written assignments, the presentation of the project in class, and the response to another student’s presentation. These components will each be assigned a grade on the MSU 4-point scale. The final grade will be an average of those components, weighted as follows:

- Critical responses to readings: 30%
- Written project: 50%
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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response to presentation</td>
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Tentative Weekly Schedule of Topics and Readings

1. Jan 8  Introduction to the course

   Two Paths to Quality Teaching: Implications for Policymakers. Debate on
teaching quality between Linda Darling-Hammond and Chester E. Finn, Jr.,
with analysis by staff from the Education Commission of the States.
Retrieved from http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/12/92/1292.htm

2. Jan 15 Overview of policy areas – Special issue Educational Policy on teacher
education reform policies, with a focus on Doing What Matters Most, a report of
the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF)

   Educational Policy, 2000, Vol. 14, No. 6

3. Jan 22 Alternatives – providers, routes, certification


   Hawley, W. D. (1990). The theory and practice of alternative certification:
implications for the improvement of teaching. Peabody Journal of Education,
67(3), 3-34.

   Hess, F. (2001). Tear down the wall: The case for a radical overhaul of teacher

Alternative Certification Programs for an Impact Evaluation of Teacher

4. Jan 29  Early entry approaches

America on students: Findings from a national evaluation. Princeton, NJ:
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

changes in entry requirements alter the teacher workforce and affect student
achievement. Education Finance and Policy, 1(2), 176-216.

   Laczko-Kerr, I., & Berliner, D. C. (2002). The effectiveness of "Teach for
America" and other under-certified teachers on student academic Achievement: A


5. **Feb 5 Federal Policy:**


HR- 6. Higher Education Amendments of 1998 (Read Title II- Teacher Quality)


Look at state Title II reports for Michigan and 4 other states of your choice; focus on Teacher Prep Program Performance [https://title2.ed.gov/Title2DR/ChooseState.asp?Type=Map&Year=2006](https://title2.ed.gov/Title2DR/ChooseState.asp?Type=Map&Year=2006)

6. **Feb 12 National accreditation**


Browse the TEAC Web site:  http://www.teac.org/


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7. Feb 19 State policies: I


    Go to the Web site for the CPRE CPRE State Policy Environment reports and reports for Michigan, California, and one other state of your choice. URL: http://www.cpre.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=56&Itemid =76

8. Feb 26 State policies II: Institutional responses


9. Mar 4  Spring Break

10. Mar 11  Teacher testing


11. Mar 18  Critical theory perspectives


12. Mar 25  AERA No Class

13. Apr 1  International studies


14. Apr 8  Grass roots policy makers


15. Apr 15 Student presentations
16. Apr 22 Student presentations
17. Apr 29 Final Exam period (content TBA)