Preparing Teachers For Tomorrow: A Case Study of TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education

Author: Molly Cummings Carney

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PREPARING TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW:

A CASE STUDY OF TEACH-NOW GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dissertation

by

MOLLY CUMMINGS CARNEY

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ABSTRACT

Current institutional and technological innovations are challenging face-to-face, college- and university-based teacher preparation programs as never before. Among those innovations are two emerging phenomena: New graduate schools of education (nGSEs) and fully online teacher preparation programs. nGSEs are new independent graduate schools that are not university-based but are state-authorized and approved as institutions of higher education to prepare teachers, endorse them for initial teacher certification, and grant master's degrees (Cochran-Smith et al., 2019). Fully online teacher preparation programs are programs that relocate teacher preparation from the physical environments of the brick-and-mortar university to the digital environments of the internet and provide prospective teachers with flexible alternatives to face-to-face pathways. While both fully online teacher preparation programs and nGSEs have garnered enthusiastic media attention and critique, there is a very limited amount of in-depth knowledge about fully online teacher preparation programs and virtually no independent research on nGSEs. This dissertation helps to address those gaps in research.

The central purpose of this dissertation was to examine the intersection of fully online teacher preparation and the phenomenon of teacher preparation at nGSEs by investigating teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education, a fully online, for-profit, nGSE headquartered in Washington, D.C. and rapidly expanding as a provider of initial teacher education. Intended to be descriptive and interpretive, this qualitative case study sought to understand the phenomenon of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW from the perspectives of its participants. Based on qualitative analysis of multiple sources of evidence, the main argument of this dissertation is that TEACH-

NOW operated at the nexus of a complex tension between the push to be innovative and the pull to be legitimate. Findings suggest that TEACH-NOW skillfully navigated that tension by establishing tight coherence around three key indicators of innovation (business model, technology, program structure) and by achieving major accepted markers of credibility within the larger teacher education organizational field. This dissertation also argues that TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation necessitated that teacher candidates self-manage their program experiences in accordance with their individual needs, circumstances, and preferences. The dissertation concludes with discussion of important themes and specific research, practice, and policy implications.

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CHAPTER ONE

Reforming and Relocating Teacher Preparation:

A Study at the Intersection of Two Emerging Phenomena

In 2006, Arthur Levine, a former president of Teachers College, authored *Educating School Teachers*, a now-famous report (Kamenetz, 2016) examining teacher preparation programs in the United States. Based on his analysis, Levine concluded that "[d]espite the existence of model and exemplary programs, teacher education in the U.S. is principally a mix of poor and mediocre programs" (p. 111). Levine went on to connect teacher preparation program quality to teacher quality claiming, "The products of poor programs undermine the quality of the teacher force and rob our children of opportunity" (p. 111).

Levine's notion that American teacher preparation programs are generally "poor and mediocre" and that they produce low-quality teachers who "rob" the nation's schoolchildren of an appropriate education reflects a failure narrative about teacher preparation that is pervasive and ongoing (Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a). That narrative is rooted in the assumption that the nation's teacher preparation programs inadequately ready their teacher candidates for the needs of today's student population and the demands of today's labor market. Because effective teaching, standardization, and accountability have emerged as key components of the current predominant education reform movement (Sahlberg, 2014), the field of teacher preparation has shouldered the blame for a perceived teacher quality problem and has been the subject of numerous reform efforts intended to innovate and improve preparation programs as well

as hold them accountable for their outcomes (Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a; Cochran-Smith, Stern et al., 2016).

Blaming teacher preparation programs (and teachers themselves) for the shortcomings of the nation's schools is nothing new (Cochran-Smith, Baker et al., 2017); this was a popular approach long before Levine's 2006 claim of mediocrity. The failure narrative reflected in Levine's conclusions stems back at least 35 years to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which in its first few lines claimed, "[T]he educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (para. 1). That apocalyptic line and Levine's conclusions about the state of American teacher preparation programs are indicative of steadily growing concerns over America's need to remain competitive in the global economy (Hanushek, Peterson, & Woessmann, 2013). Consistent with neoliberal agendas that push for market-based reform strategies, many powerful players in the United States have positioned education as central to the nation's economic well-being. These players include the United States Department of Education (USDOE) as well as think tanks, philanthropic organizations, and some education professionals and researchers (Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a). Accordingly, those individuals and groups have worked to reform numerous aspects of America's education system (Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a).

In particular, multiple entities have propagated the teacher preparation failure narrative and pushed for teacher preparation reform initiatives intended to produce a workforce of teachers who understand the role teachers and teacher educators play in the nation's economic well-being and overall global competitiveness (Cochran-Smith,

Carney et al., 2018a). For example, in 2009, in remarks tellingly titled "Teacher Preparation: Reforming the Uncertain Profession," then U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called for "revolutionary change—not evolutionary tinkering" (Duncan, 2009, para. 3) to traditional teacher preparation. According to Duncan, "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" (para. 3). In other words, the nation's "mediocre" teacher preparation programs required a major overhaul in order to ready teachers for the specific and varying needs of 21st century learners.

Further exemplifying the pervasiveness of the teacher preparation failure narrative is the work of the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a controversial advocacy organization, which released its first comprehensive *Teacher Prep Review* in 2013. Widely distributed and heavily publicized (e.g., Associated Press, 2013; Ingeno, 2013; Kelly, 2013), the findings of that review echoed both Levine's (2006) and Duncan's (2009) disparaging conclusions about the state of initial teacher education in America and took a targeted aim at institutions of higher education offering traditional teacher preparation claiming:

> [T]he colleges and universities producing America's traditionally prepared teachers...have become an industry of mediocrity, churning out first-year teachers with classroom management skills and content knowledge inadequate to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity. (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013, p. 1)

By perpetuating the notion of widespread "mediocrity" and the idea that traditional teacher preparation programs are failing America's schoolchildren (and its economy), the claims made by NCTQ, Duncan, and Levine reflect neoliberal ideologies about the role of teachers and the purpose of schooling. As we have argued (Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a), these ideologies rest on a narrow logic that goes like this: "[I]f teachers are the most important factor in students' achievement and U.S. students' achievement is substandard, then U.S. teachers are the culprits, as are the people and institutions that prepare them" (p. 23).

So, if traditional college- and university-based preparation programs are the "culprits" in the narrative about the failure of teacher education, then who are the heroes? If traditional programs are failing American schoolchildren, who can save them (and the economy) from a supposed crisis of mediocrity? While the popular labeling of college- and university-based teacher preparation programs in the United States as "mediocre" and "inadequate" is both inflammatory and debatable (e.g., Schneider, 2018; Zeichner, 2016), the ongoing failure narrative surrounding initial teacher education has contributed in recent decades to a shifting landscape in teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith, 2017). While college- and university-based teacher preparation programs still remain the dominant form of initial teacher education in the United States (USDOE Office of Postsecondary Education, 2016), "their grip has eroded dramatically" (Schneider, 2018, p. 336) since the 1980s. Specifically, the acrimonious and blame-centric atmosphere described above has resulted in a wave of competition from what Lincove, Osborne, Mills, and Bellows (2015) describe as a "growing market of start-ups" (p. 415).

Among the teacher preparation "start-ups" that have loosened the stronghold of college- and university-based programs are numerous alternate pathways including highly recognized non-profit organizations like Teach For America and The New Teacher Project (Lincove et al., 2015; Schneider, 2018; Zeichner, 2014). In addition to such well-known programs, however, a number of other innovative approaches to teacher preparation have also emerged (Liu, 2013; Schneider, 2018; Zeichner, 2014, 2016); many with the specific aim to ready qualified teachers for the diverse learning needs of today's students (Feistritzer, 2018; Mathews, 2018; Relay GSE, 2018a). Included in those alternate approaches and further eroding the grip of traditional programs are two well-publicized, but little-researched phenomena: what we have termed "new graduate schools of education" (nGSEs)[1] and fully online teacher preparation programs. Both nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation programs represent break-through teacher education reforms that offer prospective teachers preparation that their proponents believe to be anything but "mediocre."

Context

The concurrent emergence of the phenomenon of teacher preparation at nGSEs, on the one hand, and the rise of online teacher preparation, on the other, set the stage for my dissertation—a qualitative case study of teacher preparation at a fully online nGSE. In the sections below, I provide an overview of the context of my research in order to

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[1]Throughout this dissertation, my descriptions and preliminary analyses of the nGSE phenomenon as well as my review of the literature about nGSEs draw on the work of my research team for the larger nGSE study titled "Teacher Preparation at New Graduate Schools of Education: Studying a Controversial Innovation" (Cochran-Smith, Carney, & Miller, 2016; Cochran-Smith & Carney, 2017; Cochran-Smith, Carney, Keefe, Miller, & Sanchez, 2018; Cochran-Smith, Keefe, Carney, Sanchez, Olivo, & Smith, 2019), which is supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation. I have played a central role in this project from the very beginning, working as a co-author on grant proposals and in the development of the conceptualization of the research problem, the related literature, the research design, coding, and preliminary analyses.

illuminate how the phenomena of nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation contribute to the rapidly shifting teacher preparation landscape in the United States (Cochran-Smith, 2017). First, I describe how the nGSE phenomenon is shifting the location of teacher preparation away from established colleges and universities, and instead, relocating it within new institutions that are not university-based. Second, I detail the growth and popularity of fully online teacher preparation programs, which deliver all instruction, coursework, and communication via the internet and other distance-based technologies. Third, I suggest that some of the interests of the USDOE under the Trump Administration may support the continued expansion of both nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation programs. Finally, I argue that the convergence of the nGSE and fully online teacher preparation phenomena, as represented by my case study site, created an important educational problem to be researched.

The Emergence of New Graduate Schools of Education

In a 2016 interview with National Public Radio, Norm Atkins, the founder of the Relay Graduate School of Education (Relay GSE), stated that in his experience he had "rarely seen a novice teacher say, 'Oh, if only I had had more Vygotsky and more theory, I'd know just what to do now'" (as quoted in Kamenetz, 2016, para. 65). Atkins' statement reflects prevalent claims in recent years that the supposed inability of traditional college- and university-based models of teacher preparation to produce effective teachers has been caused by the long-perceived gap between theory and practice (Reid, 2011; Wilson, 2014). This idea is a driving force behind another rapidly growing innovation in initial teacher education in the United States: The shifting of teacher preparation away from universities and the relocation of it within nGSEs.

As we have defined them, nGSEs are not university-based, but are state-authorized institutions of higher education approved to prepare teachers, endorse them for initial teacher certification, and grant master's degrees. Examples of nGSEs include the oldest nGSE, High Tech High Graduate School of Education (HTH GSE), the largest nGSE, Relay GSE, and, a fully online nGSE, TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education (TEACH-NOW). Many nGSEs aim to alleviate the "teacher quality gap" in schools serving low income and minority students. For example, the Boston-based Sposato Graduate School of Education (Sposato GSE), which is part of the Match Education charter management organization, describes its approach to teacher preparation as "focused on serving low-income students in high-performing college-preparatory public schools" (Sposato GSE, 2015, para. 4). Advocates characterize teacher preparation at nGSEs as a dramatic departure from both fast-track entry routes such as Teach For America, which are perceived as recruitment not preparation, and traditional college- and university-based programs, which along with being too theory-focused are also perceived as failing to produce teachers who can boost student achievement and thus aid in keeping the United States competitive in the global economy (Gastic, 2014; Mehta & Teles, 2014). By operating as graduate schools of education, we argue that nGSEs now share an institutional jurisdiction that had long been almost exclusively reserved for schools of education at universities (Fraser & Lefty, 2018; Labaree, 2004).

Although nGSEs are a young phenomenon, they are expanding with new institutions emerging and established ones growing. For example, the Woodrow Wilson Academy of Teacher and Learning (WW Academy) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, enrolled its first cohort of teacher candidates in the fall of 2018. Reminiscent of Duncan's

2009 comments about the need to overhaul U.S. teacher preparation programs, WW Academy spokespersons said of their competency-based approach, "We aren't tinkering with teacher preparation, we've reimagined it" (WW Academy, 2018, para. 3). In addition, Relay GSE, which now has 17 campuses across the country, enrolled 3,500 aspiring teachers in the fall of 2018 (Relay GSE, 2018b; 2019), and High Tech High recently grew its teacher preparation offerings with the addition of a two-year apprenticeship program in 2018 (HTH GSE, 2019).

Despite being a relatively new innovation, nGSEs have garnered major philanthropic support and attracted enthusiastic media attention. For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, awarded over $34 million to five "Teacher Preparation Transformation Centers" including TeacherSquared, a consortium of nGSEs (Gates Foundation, 2015), and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative awarded $3 million to the WW Academy (Barnum & Zhou, 2018). In addition, in its most recent iteration of its controversial *Teacher Prep Review* (Rickenbrode, Drake, Pomerance, & Walsh, 2018), NCTQ ranked Relay GSE as a "top" teacher preparation program, which suggests that NCTQ does not consider Relay GSE to be part of the supposed "industry of mediocrity."

It is also important to note, however, that nGSEs have also prompted excoriating policy and political critiques, which have challenged the claims nGSEs make about their effectiveness and have raised questions about their impact on democratic education (e.g., Stitzlein & West, 2014; Zeichner, 2016). For example, noted education scholar Diane Ravitch questioned the legitimacy of nGSEs as institutions of higher education on her popular blog stating, "These are programs where charter teachers teach future charter teachers how to raise test scores. It is an insult to all graduate schools of education to call

Relay and Match 'graduate schools of education'" (Ravitch, 2016, para. 1). Furthermore, in a critique of Relay GSE's expansion into Connecticut and its impact on low-income districts, Lauren Anderson (2016), associate professor and chair of the education department at Connecticut College, argues, "Relay is no panacea for our [teacher] pipeline problems, and instead represents the tip of an approaching iceberg that threatens the education of the state's most under-served students and sells short the very teachers to whom we *owe* the best preparation, support, working conditions, and compensation available" (para. 6, emphasis in original).

Conflicting conclusions about nGSEs may stem partly from ideological differences, but they are also likely the result of the lack of independent research about them. In fact, there are no studies of teacher preparation at nGSEs based on access to observations of program offerings, interviews with participants, and analyses of internal documents and institutional data as well as publicly available materials. Thus, given the ongoing failure narrative surrounding the field of initial teacher education and the impact nGSEs may have on traditional college- and university-based teacher preparation programs, it is critical to explore how teacher preparation is conceptualized and enacted at nGSEs in order to provide valuable new knowledge about the nGSE model(s) of teacher preparation. As part of our larger nGSE study, the work of this dissertation helps to provide that valuable knowledge.

The Rise of Fully Online Teacher Preparation

In 2003, with funding from the USDOE, Teachers College at Western Governors University (WGU) opened its fully online teacher preparation program with an enrollment of 50 students (Carnevale, 2003). Three years later, teacher preparation

programs at WGU received "full and unconditional" accreditation from the National

Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (WGU, 2006). Then, in its

2014 *Teacher Prep Review*, which examined 2,400 American teacher preparation

programs, NCTQ awarded a top ranking to WGU's undergraduate secondary preparation

program (Greenberg, Walsh, & McKee, 2014). A year later, NCTQ's praise continued

when it ranked Teachers College at WGU first in the nation on its list of "best value"

schools and programs of education (NCTQ, 2015). By 2016, just 13 years after its

founding, Teachers College at WGU had an enrollment of more than 16,500 students and

was the "largest producer of STEM teachers in the U.S., conferring 11% of the nation's

bachelor's and master's degrees in STEM teaching" (WGU, 2016, p. 9).

The expeditious growth and recognition of WGU as a leading teacher preparation

provider is impressive on many counts, but what makes the status of its Teachers College

even more intriguing is the fact that it is part of a fully online university. In this sense,

Teachers College at WGU represents a distinct break from the long-standing dominance

of brick-and-mortar schools and departments of education in the United States (Labaree,

2004). Striving to provide "a means for individuals to learn independent of time or place"

(WGU, 2016, p. 3), Teachers College offers a wide range of fully online degree programs

and certification-only programs to students in all 50 states (WGU, 2017a).

The popularity of Teachers College at WGU reflects a larger trend in the growth

of postsecondary distance education in the United States. Defined as programs that utilize

"one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the

instructor" and depend on the internet and other communication devices to distribute

content (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016), postsecondary distance

education programs are expanding rapidly. In 2003-2004, just 6% of U.S. graduate students completed their degree programs via distance education (NCES, 2014), but by the fall of 2015, roughly only a decade later, of the 2.94 million individuals enrolled in post-baccalaureate degree programs, 26% were enrolled exclusively in distance education programs (NCES, 2016). The jump in "market share" from 6% to 26% of postsecondary students is remarkable by almost any metric.

While the figures above suggest that the internet and other distance-based technologies are changing the delivery of higher education as a whole, the particular success of Teachers College at WGU reflects the fact that it is having a strong impact on the field of teacher education (Frazier & Sadera, 2013). Specifically, interest in fully online and blended preparation programs is increasing (Liu, 2013). In addition to WGU, new online providers range from blended residency-based models (Zeichner, 2016) to fully online certification-only initiatives (Brenneman, 2015) to university-sponsored online programs (Liu, 2013). Among the new players that have joined WGU in providing fully online teacher preparation are programs at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California (USC) and TEACH-NOW, an nGSE headquartered in Washington, D.C. and the subject of this dissertation. The Rossier School of Education offers online Master of Arts in Teaching programs as well as other education degree programs that "take advantage of a state-of-the-art online learning platform to blend live, face-to-face online classes, dynamic self-paced coursework and field-based experiences" (USC Rossier School of Education, 2017, para. 1). Along somewhat different lines, TEACH-NOW is a for-profit, CAEP-accredited online institution that offers both a

certification program and master's in education degree program, with an option to do both.

The continued expansion and rising popularity of fully online teacher preparation programs like those offered by WGU, USC, and TEACH-NOW suggest the need for a greater understanding of the phenomenon of teacher preparation delivered completely online and its implications for the larger field of teacher education. By relocating teacher preparation from the physical environments of the brick-and-mortar university to the digital environments of the internet and by providing prospective teachers with cost-effective alternatives to face-to-face pathways, the phenomenon of fully online teacher preparation is positioned to have a powerful impact on the field of initial teacher education (Liu, 2013). The findings of this case study help to inform our understanding of that potential impact.

The Education Interests of the Current USDOE

While teacher preparation is by no means at the center of the Trump Administration's education interests, the perceived mediocrity of the American educational system (and by extension the nation's teacher preparation programs) remains an undercurrent of much of the rhetoric coming out the current USDOE. According to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (2018):

Everything about our lives has moved beyond the industrial era. But American education largely has not. We can see its effects in the data. The most recent Program for International Student Assessment report has the U.S. ranked 23rd in reading, 25th in science and 40th in math. That's middle of the pack. Average. A flat line. (para. 12-13)

In order to excel beyond "the pack" (i.e., America's competitors in the global economy),

DeVos (2018) believes "fresh eyes and forward thinking" (para. 7) in education are

necessary. In particular, DeVos has taken aim at institutions of higher education in the

United States, stating:

> Someone recently asked me: 'Why hasn't America's higher ed bubble burst?' This
>
> individual was baffled as to why American businesses haven't yet created their
>
> own education programs to equip individuals with the necessary skills, instead of
>
> relying on others to get it right for them.
>
> And it's a very good question. Because there is a fundamental disconnect between
>
> education and the economy.
>
> That's why students need better. They need learning environments that are agile,
>
> relevant and exciting. Every student deserves a customized, self-paced, and
>
> challenging life-long learning journey. (para. 23-25)

By framing traditional college and university settings as stagnant remnants of an earlier

age, DeVos reflects key assumptions underlying the phenomena of fully online teacher

preparation and nGSEs. First, similar to the phenomenon of fully online teacher

preparation and its reliance on synchronous and asynchronous online technologies,

DeVos believes it is time to move beyond the industrial era face-to-face schooling and

embrace new, technology-enhanced learning environments. Second, similar to the

phenomenon of nGSEs and the charter management organizations behind many of them,

DeVos sees business-led, "grow your own" educational opportunities as a way to "get it

right" and break the stronghold of traditional institutions of higher education.

With DeVos at the helm, the education agenda of the Trump Administration may help advance the expansion and popularity of both online teacher preparation and nGSEs. Beyond "fresh eyes and forward thinking" when it comes to learning environments and institutions of higher education, the Administration also favors both greater school choice (Weller, 2017), which may expand charter management organizations including nGSEs, and for-profit and online education programs and businesses, (Kamenetz, 2016) possibly paving the way for additional for-profit, online teacher preparation programs.

The Convergence of Two Emerging Phenomena

As illustrated above, both nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation programs are emerging phenomena in teacher preparation primed to challenge the longstanding dominance of traditional college- and university-based preparation programs. With Sposato GSE marketing itself as a "different kind of graduate school" (Sposato GSE, 2015, para. 1) and Relay GSE claiming that it is "informing new models of excellence in educator preparation" (Relay GSE, 2018b, para. 3), it is clear that, as Schorr (2013) puts it, what such programs represent "is not incremental improvement on the traditional model, but an entirely new one" (para. 9). Along similar lines, fully online teacher preparation programs also represent a break from the "traditional model." According to Liu (2013), "There is the growing awareness that traditional schools of education are failing to produce exceptional teachers," (p. 31), and they are "ripe for disruption" (p. 28) from online preparation programs. Further bolstered by the interests of the USDOE under the current Administration, there is the strong potential for both the nGSE and fully online teacher preparation phenomena to challenge the perceived "mediocrity" of traditional programs. Therefore, an exploration of teacher preparation at the intersection

of these two phenomena represented an important and timely research opportunity. That intersection was found at TEACH-NOW, a fully online nGSE and the research site for this dissertation.

TEACH-NOW: A Strategic Site for Study

The rising popularity of online teacher preparation programs paired with the rapid expansion of nGSEs indicate a complicated and uncertain future for traditional college- and university-based teacher preparation programs in the United States. While uncertainty is nothing new in the field of initial teacher education where there have long been debates and disagreements about the purpose, design, and location of initial teacher education (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008), current institutional and technological innovations are challenging face-to-face, college- and university-based programs like never before. As a result, as a fully online nGSE, TEACH-NOW was a strategic site for studying a notable educational problem.

As described earlier, a strong and convincing failure narrative continues to plague the field of initial teacher education in the United States, and it is within that contentious atmosphere, that nGSEs and fully online programs have emerged to compete with traditional approaches. Yet, while both fully online teacher preparation programs and nGSEs have garnered enthusiastic media attention (e.g., Brenneman, 2015; Kamenetz, 2016; Liu, 2013), as we have noted, there is a very limited amount of in-depth knowledge about fully online teacher preparation programs and virtually no independent research on nGSEs. This dissertation helps to address that gap in the research through a qualitative case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW, a fully online nGSE. As noted above, it also represents the exploration of two emerging phenomena of substantive importance.

We believe that the overall contribution of the larger nGSE study can be summarized succinctly: Rather than defending teacher preparation at nGSEs or dismissing it out of hand, our intention is to be as even-handed as possible in examining how teacher preparation is conceptualized and enacted at nGSEs, how nGSEs operate institutionally, and what the implications are for teacher education and professional education more broadly (Cochran-Smith et al., 2019). Thus, this case study played a key role in the ongoing formation of our understanding of the phenomenon of teacher preparation at nGSEs while also shedding light on the phenomenon of fully online teacher preparation. By describing and theorizing two intersecting and understudied phenomena, my qualitative case study of TEACH-NOW allowed for the theorization of the institution's approach to teacher preparation and its effort to prepare "tomorrow's teachers for tomorrow's learners in tomorrow's learning world" (TEACH-NOW, 2018a, para. 4).

Purpose and Research Questions

The central purpose of this dissertation was to examine the intersection of fully online teacher preparation and the nGSE phenomenon by investigating teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW, a fully online, for-profit, nGSE headquartered in Washington, D.C. and rapidly expanding as a provider of initial teacher education. Intended to be descriptive and interpretive, my study sought to understand how teacher preparation was conceptualized and enacted at TEACH-NOW. Specifically, I investigated the understandings and assumptions of various TEACH-NOW participants (e.g., candidates, instructors, and leaders) related to the institution's particular approach to teacher preparation as well as the purpose of teacher preparation more generally.

It is crucial to note that the aim of this dissertation, as well as the work of the larger nGSE study, was neither judgment nor evaluation of TEACH-NOW or of nGSEs writ large. Rather, the overarching goal was to understand the phenomenon of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW from the perspectives of its participants. In order to fulfill that goal and explore teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW in depth, my dissertation was guided by the following research questions:

1) How do the leaders and instructors at TEACH-NOW conceptualize and enact the work of teacher preparation?

    a. What are their goals, beliefs, and assumptions about teacher preparation, online learning, and the process of learning to teach?

    b. What are the teaching, learning, social, and organizational conditions of the institution?

2) How do teacher candidates experience the process of learning to teach at TEACH-NOW?

    a. What are their backgrounds and reasons for choosing TEACH-NOW?

    b. What are their perceptions of effective teaching and sense of preparedness?

This set of research questions was structured to investigate how TEACH-NOW's unique position as an online nGSE both shaped and was shaped by the understandings and assumptions of its participants.

Arguments

In this dissertation, I make two interconnected arguments about the phenomenon of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW. First, I argue that TEACH-NOW aspired not

only to be a major innovator of teacher preparation but also to be regarded as a legitimate teacher preparation provider. As a result, I suggest that TEACH-NOW operated at the nexus of a complex tension between the push to be innovative and pull to be legitimate. Findings suggest that TEACH-NOW skillfully navigated that tension by establishing tight coherence around three key indicators of innovation and by achieving major accepted markers of credibility within the larger teacher education organizational field. I found that the "push and pull" dynamic was at the center of how TEACH-NOW conceptualized and enacted teacher preparation, which played out in five key areas: 1) its business model; 2) its emphasis on technology; 3) its program structure; 4) its program content; 5) its institutional conduct.

Second, I argue that the innovation-legitimation "push and pull" at TEACH-NOW played a major role in shaping how TEACH-NOW candidates experienced the process of learning to teach. The "push and pull" dynamic reflected in TEACH-NOW's conceptualization and enactment of teacher preparation necessitated what I describe as a "self-managed" experience of learning to teach for its teacher candidates. Specifically, I suggest the process of learning to teach at TEACH-NOW required candidates to self-manage their program experiences in accordance with their individual needs, circumstances, and preferences. That self-managed experience of learning to teach was rooted in five operating assumptions: 1) efficiency is imperative; 2) technology is a necessity; 3) learning is autonomous; 4) practice is a priority; 5) the preparation provider is a support resource.

Overall, based on my analysis of how its leaders and instructors conceptualized and enacted the work of teacher preparation and how its teacher candidates experienced

the process of learning to teach, I argue that TEACH-NOW established a teacher preparation program that was in many ways not only innovative but also legitimate.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter Two provides of a review of the literature that informed my research. I begin with a discussion of the two theoretical frameworks that guided the research design, data analysis, and interpretation of findings. I also briefly review the central theoretical frameworks undergirding the larger nGSE study of which this case study is a part. I then offer a review of three bodies of research that are particularly relevant to this case study of TEACH-NOW: 1) research on nGSEs; 2) research on fully online teacher preparation; 3) research on synchronous online classes in higher education. In doing so, I present the results of my systematic analyses of each body of literature and connect each to my case study of TEACH-NOW.

In Chapter Three, I detail the research methodology that guided my dissertation. First, I clarify the definition of case study research used in this study and explain why a qualitative case study design was most appropriate for my exploration of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW. Second, I offer a brief overview of the case study site. Third, I describe the data generation process and review the study's participants and multiple sources of evidence generated. Finally, I discuss how I analyzed and interpreted the data generated.

In Chapters Four and Five, I present the findings of this case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW and make the two interconnected arguments described above. In Chapter Four, I detail TEACH-NOW's push to innovate teacher preparation and argue that the institution's intent to innovate shaped its understanding of the process

of learning to teach. I also suggest that TEACH-NOW's innovative aspects contributed to the self-managed program experiences of TEACH-NOW candidates. To do that, I first focus on how TEACH-NOW established tight coherence around three key indicators of innovation: 1) business model; 2) technology; 3) program structure. I begin by presenting my analysis of TEACH-NOW's business model and show how the institution's for-profit, tuition-driven strategy responded to demands in the teacher preparation market. I then link TEACH-NOW's business model to its deliberate emphasis on technology and pay particular attention to its utilization of e-learning and its assumptions about the nature of education in the 21st century. Next, I discuss the structure of TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program and suggest that four main elements undergirded how the institution understood the process of learning to teach. In doing so, I draw explicit connections between the enactment of TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation and its technology-centric, market-driven conceptualization in order to show that a strong level of coherence helped to support the innovative aspect of the institution's flagship program. I conclude the chapter by demonstrating that the institution's push to be innovative resulted in teacher candidates' self-management of the process of learning to teach based on particular notions related to efficiency, technology, and learning.

In Chapter Five, I analyze the "pull" aspect of the innovation-legitimation "push and pull" dynamic. Here I argue that program content and institutional conduct reflected TEACH-NOW's ongoing effort to establish its legitimacy as a teacher preparation provider. In addition, I show that the steps TEACH-NOW took to legitimate its teacher preparation program further contributed to the necessity that teacher candidates self-manage their learning experiences. I begin by reviewing the reasons TEACH-NOW

needed to legitimate its program in the first place by briefly discussing concerns in the discourse about nGSEs, online teacher preparation, and technology-related innovations in education. I then suggest that in order to address those concerns, the institution attained perceived markers of credibility within both its program's curricular content and its conduct as an institution of higher education. In terms of its program content, I suggest that TEACH-NOW utilized a universal curriculum rooted in two well-known teacher education knowledge sources and centered on effective instructional practices. In terms of institutional conduct, I suggest that TEACH-NOW's accreditation status, faculty, and affiliations and referrals were designed to strengthen its professional reputation, thus helping to make it credible in the eyes of teacher preparation consumers. Chapter Five concludes with my analysis of how the pull of legitimacy impacted TEACH-NOW's teacher candidates and played key a role in shaping the self-managed experience of learning to teach based on specific understandings of practice and support.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I present the key overarching themes and implications that emerged from my case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW. Specifically, I suggest that my analysis of the innovation-legitimation "push and pull" at TEACH-NOW not only provided insight into the teacher preparation approach taken by one online nGSE but also resulted in the development of several important themes related to nGSEs, fully online teacher preparation, and technology and innovation in higher education. In the chapter, I summarize those themes and consider their significance to the nGSE phenomenon, the wider field of teacher education, and the more general education landscape. I conclude with a discussion of some of the specific research, practice, and

policy implications of my dissertation with a focus on the impact of technology,

innovation, and accreditation on the future of teacher preparation.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks and a review of the literature that informed my research of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW. First, I discuss the two theoretical frameworks that guided the research design of my case study as well as my data analysis and interpretation of findings. Next, I briefly review the central theoretical frameworks undergirding the larger nGSE study of which this case study is a part. Third, I offer a review of three bodies of research closely connected to my study: 1) research on nGSEs; 2) research on fully online teacher preparation; 3) research on synchronous online classes in higher education.

Theoretical Frameworks

This dissertation was informed primarily by two theoretical frameworks: Garrison's (2003, 2011, 2017) theory for understanding e-learning experiences in higher education and Turkle's (2011, 2015, 2017) ideas about human-technology relationships. Garrison's Community of Inquiry (CoI) e-learning theory provides a structured and well-established approach to theorizing teaching and learning in digital environments, and thus, enabled me to examine and unpack the various online activities, events, and expectations that comprised the teacher preparation program at TEACH-NOW. Meanwhile, Turkle's notions about 21st century society's complex relationship with technology offered another layer to my analysis of TEACH-NOW's reliance on technology and how it shaped the socialization of participants in its teacher preparation program. Figure 1 outlines the purpose each framework served in my case study and provides an overview of the key ideas of each.

FRAMEWORK	Garrison's Community of Inquiry Framework			Turkle's Notions of Human-Technology Relationships		
PURPOSE	Guided analysis of the online learning environment and participants' understandings of teacher preparation			Guided analysis of the interactions among participants and of how technology influenced participants' experiences		
KEY IDEAS	Social Presence	Cognitive Presence	Teaching Presence	Connectivity	Multitasking	Conversation

Figure 1. The two theoretical frameworks that informed the study.

Garrison's Community of Inquiry framework

Garrison's Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework for understanding e-learning in higher education (Garrison, 2003, 2011, 2017; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2001) guided my analysis of TEACH-NOW's e-learning environment and helped me to unpack understandings of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW from the perspectives of the participants (see Figure 1). According to Garrison (2011), "E-learning is the utilization of electronically mediated asynchronous and synchronous communication for the purpose of thinking and learning collaboratively" (p. 2). Given the distinctive characteristics of e-learning, Garrison and colleagues developed the CoI framework in order to understand the communal and collaborative aspects of an e-learning environment (Garrison, 2011). In other words, the CoI framework provides a "coherent context" to

understand "the foundational concepts, principles, and organization of an e-learning experience" (Garrison, 2017, p.109). Specifically, the CoI framework suggests that the following three elements are central to an e-learning experience: *social presence, cognitive presence,* and *teaching presence* (Garrison, 2003, 2011, 2017). I briefly detail each "presence" below.

To begin, *social presence* refers to the relational and emotional aspects of e-learning, which include student interaction, communication, and trust-building in online learning environments. According to Garrison (2017), "Social presence is largely responsible for setting the academic climate and is defined by three overlapping components—interpersonal/affective communication, open communication, and sustained group cohesion" (p. 38). Put another way, the social presence is the degree to which participants view their participation in an e-learning experience as socially and emotionally "real" (Garrison et al., 2000) and, thus, are able to feel an authentic sense of belonging within a group with a shared academic purpose (Garrison, 2017). As a result, exploring the social presence of TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program allowed me to examine the relational, emotional, and collaborative elements of its learning environment and to consider whether and how participants built community or felt connected to their fellow participants.

Next*,* the *cognitive presence* in an e-learning experience relates to the degree to which learning conditions support critical thinking and reflection and, as a result, create a "purposeful learning community" (Garrison, 2017, p. 67). An examination of cognitive presence in an e-learning experience involves determining whether and how students are involved in meaningful inquiry and collaborative constructivist approaches to learning.

Furthermore, Garrison (2017) emphasizes the importance of metacognition and collaboration and argues that e-learning should be "grounded in personal reflection and shared discourse" (p. 67). The concept of cognitive presence aided in my analysis of the participants' perceptions and understandings related to the learning conditions within the online experience at TEACH-NOW and allowed me to explore the level to which participants engaged in higher-order thinking.

Finally, the *teaching presence* element of the CoI framework refers to an online instructor's curricular and pedagogical decisions and considers how those decisions are tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of an e-learning environment. Garrison (2017) posits:

> While it is clear that the communication technologies associated with online and blended learning provide enormous opportunities and choice for connection and reflection, it also presents significant challenges associated with designing and delivering a meaningful and worthwhile educational experience. The educational opportunities of the Internet and communication technologies present choices that require informed leadership if learning is to be purposeful and developmental. Implicit in this is the need to rethink the purpose, approach and nature of the educational transaction. (p. 69)

Such "rethinking" involves thoughtful design and organization decisions on the part of the instructor that lay out clear expectations and objectives for an e-learning experience. In addition, the teaching presence includes consideration of how the facilitation of discourse and the use of direct instruction are best incorporated into an online learning environment. The idea of teaching presence helped me to investigate and understand the

key practices of TEACH-NOW's instructors in relation to teaching in an e-learning environment, providing feedback, and assessing teacher candidates.

When considered separately and together, the three "presences" that comprise the CoI framework helped me to make sense of the unique and complex aspects of the TEACH-NOW e-learning experience (Garrison, 2017). Overall, the application of the CoI framework guided my understanding and examination of TEACH-NOW's enactment of its teacher preparation curriculum, pedagogy, and practices via an online platform.

Turkle's Notions Related to Human-Technology Relationships

While Garrison's CoI framework aided in my theorization around specific aspects of TEACH-NOW's online approach to teacher preparation, Turkle's (2011, 2015, 2017) ideas about human-technology relationships helped in my construction of broader understandings about the impact of technology on TEACH-NOW's participants (see Figure 1). In particular, Turkle's work informed my analysis of the interactions between candidates and instructors as well as among candidates and aided in my investigation of how TEACH-NOW's online learning environment intersected with and influenced participants' experiences. While Turkle's extensive body of work (e.g., 1984, 1995, 1999, 2005) offers numerous insights and ideas into the impact of technology on our lives, I focused on her notions related to *connectivity*, *multitasking*, and *conversation*. I briefly discuss each of those notions below.

In terms of *connectivity*, according to Turkle (2017), the format, function, and ubiquity of online connections allow individuals to be "alone together" (p. 14). By that, Turkle means that today's "always-on," heavily networked society has shaped new cultural norms where, thanks to technology (e.g., cell phones, computers, and tablets),

"we are together even when we are alone" (p. 169). Despite our being digitally "together"
even when we are physically "alone," we are still able to regulate our level of
connectivity in order to best suit our individual needs, preferences, and desires. Turkle
(2017) argues:

> Online connections were first conceived as a substitute for face-to-face contact,
> when the latter was for some reason impractical. Don't have time to make a phone
> call? Shoot off a text message. But very quickly, the text message became the
> connection of choice. We discovered the network—the world of connectivity—to
> be uniquely suited to the overworked and overscheduled life it makes possible.
> And now we look to the network to defend us against loneliness even as we use it
> to control the intensity of our connections. Technology makes it easy to
> communicate when we wish and to disengage at will. (p. 13)

In other words, our ability to utilize technology to both connect *and* disengage with
others enables us to regulate whether, how, and to what degree we participate in certain
activities and relationships. Turkle's notions about the ease with which technology allows
for engagement/disengagement aided in my exploration and analysis of how TEACH-
NOW's participants understood their connectedness to their fellow participants and the
levels to which they chose to interact and participate or to disconnect and detach.

Our ability to be "alone together" lends itself to another key concept of Turkle's
(2015, 2017) that also informed my study—*multitasking*. According to Turkle (2017),
"Subtly, over time, multitasking, once seen as something of a blight, was recast as a
virtue....Experts went so far as to declare multitasking not just as a skill but *the* crucial
skill for successful work and learning in digital culture" (emphasis in original, p. 162). As

a result, Turkle argues that technology fosters "a new notion of time" (p. 164) where activities can be layered upon one another and completed simultaneously. That constant stream of expectations and demands can lead to a sense of being overwhelmed and experiencing disruption. We are lured and pressured by our devices to be "always on" and to get things accomplished quickly. Turkle (2017) points out:

> The self shaped in a world of rapid response measures success by calls made, emails answered, texts replied to, contacts reached. This self is calibrated on the basis of what technology proposes, by what it makes easy. But in the technology-induced pressure for volume and velocity, we confront a paradox. We insist that our work is increasingly complex, yet we have created a communications culture that has decreased the time for us to sit and think uninterrupted. As we communicate in ways that ask for almost instantaneous responses, we don't allow for sufficient space to consider complicated problems. (p. 166)

Turkle's notions about individuals' propensity to engage in multitasking and the resulting lack of time to sit, think, and consider were helpful for unpacking and analyzing participants' relationships and interactions with TEACH-NOW's online learning platform and their assumptions about program elements such as class participation, group work, and assessments.

Finally, Turkle's (2015) ideas about technology's impact on *conversation* also informed my analysis. Connected to her ideas about multitasking described above, Turkle writes about "attentional disarray" (p. 209) in education arguing that technology splits students' attention and impacts their ability and desire to engage in substantive conversations. Instead of talking when in educational settings (whether online or face-to-

face), students text, graze for information on the internet, or type transcription-like notes on their laptops (Turkle, 2015). Such dependence on technology has led us to be "in flight from those face-to-face conversations that enrich our imaginations and shepherd the imagined into the real" (p. 317). Turkle's thoughts on the impact of technology on conversation in educational settings aided in my understanding of whether and how TEACH-NOW's students and instructors attended to the "attentional disarray" and whether and how they defined meaningful interactions and discussions in a fully online teacher preparation program.

According to Turkle (2017), "Our new devices provide space for the emergence of a new state of the self, itself, split between screen and the physical real, wired into existence through technology" (p. 16). In sum, it is that concept—that "new state of the self"—that I hoped to explore by applying Turkle's notions related to human-technology relationships to my theorizing of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW. In particular, her ideas related to connectivity, multitasking, and conversation enabled me to consider questions such as: How do participants negotiate the split "between screen and the physical real"? Does that "new state of the self" influence participants' understandings and assumptions in relation to their TEACH-NOW experiences? How does technology impact candidates' sense of preparedness for the very human work of face-to-face teaching?

The Central Theoretical Frameworks for the Larger nGSE Study

The larger study of which this dissertation is part seeks not only to treat each nGSE under investigation as what Stake (2006) describes as an "intrinsic" case, interesting and significant in its own right, but also aims to view the cases as

"instrumental" in that each helps us understand a larger phenomenon beyond the individual cases. Part of what this means is that while my individual, intrinsic case study of TEACH-NOW was informed by the two theoretical frameworks detailed above, additional theoretical frames undergird the larger nGSE study. In particular, in order to allow the team to get at the instrumental potential of each of the individual cases, cross-case analysis for the larger study is informed by theoretical frameworks that aim to sort out the assumptions, practices, agendas, and institutional settings of teacher preparation programs at nGSEs. The larger study draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) "communities of practice," Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999, 2009) "teacher learning in communities," and concepts from institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Scott, Ruef, Mendel, & Caronna, 2000).

First, Lave and Wenger's (1991) "communities of practice" is used to theorize learning through discourse, norms, and shared cultural practices at contrasting nGSEs. The concept of communities of practice focuses on social structures and procedures within a group, usually organized around the goal of successfully accomplishing a given task in which participants interact regularly. Lave and Wenger's notion of "legitimate peripheral participation" theorizes learning within communities wherein newcomers engage to varying degrees in the activities of a profession while interacting with and learning from old-timers. From this perspective, novices gain knowledge and experiences as they gradually take on responsibilities within a community.

Second, Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999, 2009) "teacher learning in communities" is used to unpack conceptions of knowledge, practice, communities, and justice. In particular, Cochran-Smith and Lytle's framework suggests that underlying

different teacher learning initiatives, there are contrasting ideas about knowledge, practice, and their relationships. These contrasts reflect differing assumptions about the following: the sources and forms of knowledge needed for teaching, the nature of teaching and professional practice, the contexts/communities that support teacher learning, and the larger purposes of teaching/teacher education. Additionally, Cochran-Smith's (1998, 2010) "theory of teacher education for social justice" adds to this framework by considering competing paradigms of justice (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Gewirtz, 1998; North, 2006) as they are played out in various teacher learning initiatives. By integrating knowledge, practice, and social justice/equity, these teacher learning frameworks provide a broad scaffolding for unpacking an nGSE's principles related to what and how teachers need to know in order to teach well, practices used to help teachers learn, and how ideas related to equity and justice ideas inform the work of a particular nGSE program.

Finally, concepts from institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Scott et al., 2000) are used to analyze nGSEs as part of larger changes in teacher education in the United States over the last 30 years (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Wilson, 2014). In particular, we draw on the concept of "institutional environments" (Scott et al., 2000) at nGSEs and utilize the distinction between adaptation, which involves new activities within existing organizations wherein change is incremental, and ecological change, which involves new organizations that challenge existing organizations wherein change is discontinuous (Hannan & Freeman, 1989). By using institutional theory to inform our data generation and analysis, we are able to explore the

nGSE phenomenon as a type of change within the field of teacher education and its implications for that field.

The larger study, guided by teacher learning theories and institutional theory, is the research context within which this case study of TEACH-NOW was positioned. These frameworks will inform our later "instrumental" analysis of the site and my team's theorizing of the nGSE phenomenon on the whole.

<div align="center">Review of Related Literature</div>

Along with the theoretical frameworks described above, the following three bodies of related literature informed my work: research on nGSEs, research on fully online teacher preparation, and research on synchronous online classes in higher education. In this section, I first describe how I conducted the review of each using a specific framework for analyzing research. I then present the results of my systematic analyses of each body of literature and connect each to the work of my case study. Figure 2 provides an overview of each of the three bodies of literature reviewed and the major groupings of articles (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016) that I identified in each.
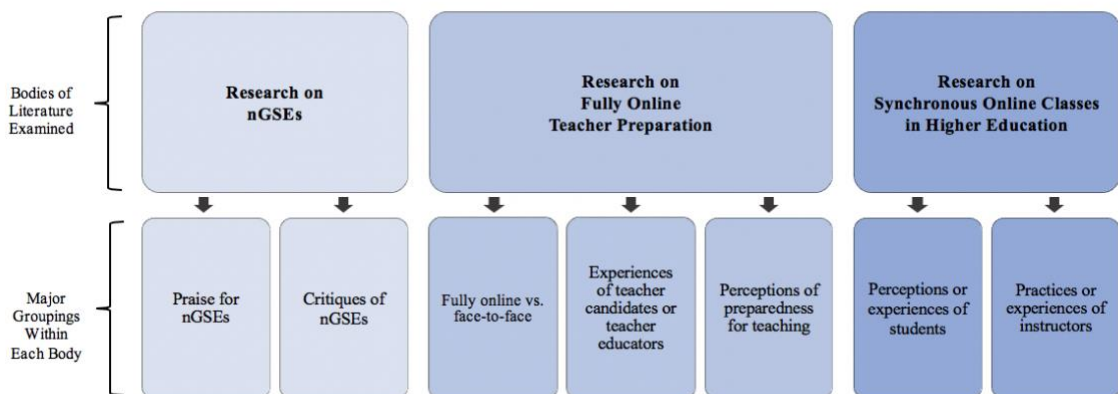
Figure 2. The three bodies of related literature reviewed.

Conducting the Literature Review

My analyses of the literature were informed by the analytic framework developed by Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2016) for analyzing research on teacher education which, they label the "Research as Historically Situated Social Practice" (RASP) framework. Constructed to guide their landscape review of teacher preparation literature, Cochran-Smith and Villegas' framework pairs "the larger social, political, and economic forces and resulting ideologies" (p. 441) that have influenced education in recent decades with the notion of research as "social practices" (p. 441). Cochran-Smith and Villegas identified five aspects of the social practices in which teacher preparation researchers engage that can be used to unpack research on a given topic: 1) construction of problems and framing of research questions; 2) underlying assumptions and logic of argumentation; 3) researcher identity/positionality, intended purposes, and audiences; 4) research designs, theoretical frameworks, epistemologies, and uses of evidence; 5) issues and trends in findings and assumed implications.

Analyzing literature based on those social practices helps to illuminate the perspectives, approaches, and assumptions undergirding a study thus allowing for a nuanced analysis of context and purpose across groups of studies. Examining the works included in each of the three bodies of literature reviewed using the RASP framework allowed for the investigation of specific characteristics of individual studies and articles as well as commonalities and differences across the entirety of each collection. Such systematic analyses revealed particular "broad major groupings" (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016, p. 446) within each of the three bodies of literature and afforded a detailed review for each (see Figure 2).

Research on nGSEs

Although teacher preparation at nGSEs has received considerable attention in the press and in reports from advocacy groups, my research team and I could only locate 11 peer-reviewed articles about the phenomenon. It is important to note that most of the articles reviewed below represent conceptual analyses, commentaries, and descriptions and *not* empirical studies. My analysis of those 11 articles revealed two major groupings: 1) praise or positive descriptions of nGSEs' approaches to teacher preparation; and 2) critiques of nGSEs' approaches to teacher preparation. Below, I present the results of my analysis organized by the two groupings of literature and then offer explicit connections between the existing literature and the work of my case study at TEACH-NOW.

Praise or positive descriptions of nGSEs' approaches to teacher preparation. Four of the existing peer-reviewed papers examining the nGSEs were conceptual analyses, which might also be thought of as advocacy papers, that identified key aspects of teacher preparation at selected nGSEs and linked these to broader education reforms that the authors argued are greatly needed in our 21st century society (Caillier & Riordan, 2009; Gastic, 2014; Kronholz, 2012; Newman, 2009).

Two of the four pieces focused on teacher preparation at High Tech High GSE. Newman (2009) argued that traditional university-based models of teacher preparation are "impractical" (p. 43) and, thus, identified High Tech High as one of three innovative, highly selective, and practice-centered preparation programs that address the supposed impracticalities of the dominant model. Specifically, Newman discussed the High Tech High teacher intern program's streamlined approach to teacher preparation coursework, its close-knit community, and its aim to prepare teachers to work in the High Tech High

network of charter schools. Connecting to that last point, Caillier and Riordan (2009) offered expanded commentary on High Tech High GSE's enactment of a "contextualized" (p. 492) approach to teacher education. As a response to globalization, technology, and unbounded learning spaces, the authors, who were faculty at High Tech High GSE, posited design principles for teacher preparation located entirely in K-12 schools. They argued:

> There are too few sites where inspired teachers can put into practice the theory they learn in schools of education. And there are too many university-based teacher education programs that are disconnected from the daily lives of schools. That is why, for us, the logical approach to revitalizing teacher education is to situate schools of education within local K-12 environments that have an explicit reform agenda and that are already engaged in the important work of changing how we think about teaching and learning. (p. 495)

As the above quotation shows, like Newman (2009), Caillier and Riordan (2009) viewed traditional university-based teacher preparation programs as "disconnected" and ineffective in preparing quality teachers for 21st century society.

An emphasis on the shortcomings of traditional university-based teacher preparation programs also emerged in the two other pieces in this first grouping, which praised Relay GSE's approach to teacher preparation and its focus on accountability. Kronholz (2012) argued that "if there were ever a system in need of reinvention, it would be teacher education" (p. 4) and then suggested that Relay GSE "breaks the mold" (p. 5). Kronholz highlighted Relay GSE's focus on classroom management and engagement techniques, use of online and scripted teacher education classes, and emphasis on

feedback. Kronholz also described Relay GSE's aim "to transform teacher education to fit the needs of urban schools" (p. 2) and lauded how the institution links the success of teacher candidates to student achievement on standardized tests. Similarly, Gastic (2014), the former director of research at Relay GSE, analyzed "Teacher Prep 2.0" (p. 90) at Relay GSE and other sites focused singularly on practice and accountability, juxtaposing these to the failures of traditional university-based preparation. For example, Gastric argued that many traditional programs are "hamstrung by low selectivity, low academic expectations and rigor, incoherent or haphazard curricula, and a dearth of clinical practice" (p. 93). Gastric then positioned Relay GSE and its "2.0" counterparts in contrast to those programs claiming they operate based on clear theories of action, hold themselves accountable for student performance, and emphasize reflection, clinical practice, and technology.

When examined collectively, the four pieces in this first grouping of literature on nGSEs served to further the failure narrative of traditional college- and university-based programs that I detailed in Chapter One. Without offering independent empirical evidence to support their praise and promotion of the phenomenon, the authors of these pieces advocated for nGSEs' approach to teacher preparation. Concerns over that lack of evidence are raised in the next grouping and, as I explain below, help to underscore the importance of our nGSE study and the work of my dissertation.

Critiques of nGSEs' approaches to teacher preparation. In contrast to the articles detailed above, the remaining seven existing papers on the nGSE phenomenon represented critiques of various nGSEs' approaches to teacher preparation. The papers were critical policy/discourse analyses and use policy tools and reports, publicly-

available program materials, newspaper accounts, website materials, and similar documents (Mungal, 2015, 2016; Stitzlein & West, 2014; Zeichner, 2016; Zeichner & Conklin, 2016; Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015) or personal experience (Smith, 2015) to raise questions about and offer trenchant critique of the underlying purposes and assumptions, claims, or policy/political implications of teacher preparation programs at nGSEs or related independent teacher education entities.

Two of the seven papers in this second grouping focused on the teacher preparation practices and policies at Relay GSE and/or Match (the teacher residency program housed at Sposato GSE) and provided critical commentary on the impact of those practices and policies on both the field of teacher education and P-12 student populations. Specifically, Stitzlein and West (2014) used discourse analysis of program materials and media to critique Relay GSE and Match's dislocation from university settings as well as the programs' lack of attention to theory, teaching flexibility, and democratic education. Stitzlein and West's analysis led them to conclude that Relay GSE and Match are more representative of teacher *training* than teacher *education*. They argued:

> The name teacher training better reflects the focus of Match and Relay on replicating applications geared heavily toward student test achievement, rather than developing a more comprehensive understanding of the social purposes of schooling, the cognitive process of learning, and the political and economic implications of schools. While they may come to demonstrate some improved aspects of teacher training, these teacher preparation programs must be careful

that their narrow focus on applying effective test-score enhancing techniques

without critical analysis does not prevent new teachers from

learning to critique their role in shaping and carrying out the purposes of

schooling. (p. 9)

Building on Stitzlein and West's critique, former Match teacher resident Smith (2015)

added that Match's economic perspective that views time as a commodity resulted in

prescriptive teaching methods and the construction of students as unable to manage their

own learning. According to Smith, by relying on those prescriptive approaches in which

the "teacher rigorously dictates all learning" (p. 4), teacher preparation at Match "resides

in a radically positivist conception of teaching that confines the horizon of possibility

within a classroom" (p. 5). Combined, Smith's (2015) and Stitzlein and West's (2014)

analyses reflected complex concerns about Relay GSE and Match's explicit focus on

raising student achievement and the larger impact of that focus on the role of democracy

in teaching and teacher preparation.

Along similar lines, Mungal (2015, 2016) offered an exploration of Relay GSE's

impact on university-based teacher preparation programs in New York City and its

relationship with Teach For America. Through analysis of publicly available documents

and interviews with faculty and administrators at New York City-area university-based

schools of education, Mungal (2015, 2016) concluded that Relay GSE's emergence

reflects free-market ideologies and furthers reform efforts aimed at de-professionalizing

the teaching profession. Specifically, Mungal (2015) posited that due to Relay GSE's

continued expansion and partnership with TFA there would no longer "be a need for the

education schools and their emphasis on differentiated learning and pedagogical courses.

Instead Relay GSE would promote their brand of prescriptive learning and classroom management methods to their students" (p. 20).

The three remaining critiques in this grouping centered on the dearth of peer-reviewed research on the nGSE phenomenon. It is important to note that all three of the remaining critiques were authored fully or in part by Kenneth Zeichner, a noted teacher education scholar and proponent of democratic teacher education reforms. First, arguing that research has been misrepresented in policies limiting university participation and expanding non-university participation in teacher preparation, Zeichner and Conklin (2016) used the notions of "ventriloquism" and "echo chambers" to challenge Relay's claims about its graduates' effectiveness. They contended, "Given Relay's branding as an exemplar for U.S. teacher education, it seems reasonable to require that the program be able to produce independently conducted and preferably peer-reviewed research to substantiate its claims about success in achieving its goals" (p. 17). Similarly, Zeichner and Peña-Sandoval (2015), raised questions about the philanthropic backing of both Relay GSE and Match and drew attention to the lack of empirical research on their effectiveness and "superiority" (p. 17) as preparation programs. Zeichner and Peña-Sandoval argued, "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" (p. 17).

Finally, drawing on "research and other sources of information" (p. 3), Zeichner (2016) examined what is known about the quality of five non-university teacher preparation programs (including four nGSEs: TEACH-NOW, Relay GSE, Sposato GSE, and HTH GSE) and found the widespread adulation and rapid growth of independent

programs to be rooted in unsubstantiated claims and insufficient evidence. Specifically, Zeichner suggested that claims about program quality and impact made by the five programs are based more on ideology and opinion rather than on credible forms of evidence such as independent research and external program evaluation. Zeichner argued, "While much or most of the descriptive material available on independent program websites and in promotional articles in the media proclaim independent pathways to teacher education to be bold, innovative efforts that represent the future of teacher education, credible evidence to support such judgments simply does not appear in existing research" (p. 16). In addition, echoing the arguments of Smith (2015) and Stitzlein and West (2014) detailed above, Zeichner raised concerns about independent programs' narrow views of teacher effectiveness and their overemphasis on raising student test scores.

Connection to TEACH-NOW case study. The 11 articles that comprise this small body of literature reflected stark differences in the perspectives that divide the critics from the promoters of the nGSE phenomenon. Those differences suggested that whether nGSE teacher preparation is considered a constructive innovation to the field of teacher preparation or a threat to democratic education (or something in between) depended in part on where the researcher stood in relation to the premises of the education reform movement. Kronholz (2012), for example, lauded Relay GSE because it extends high stakes accountability from teachers to education schools, while both Stitzlein and West (2014) and Zeichner and Conklin (2016) were concerned about the rise of entrepreneurial and charter-inspired education initiatives without deep public debate about the impact of their ideologies.

The contrasting positions reflected in this body of literature underscored the need for studies of nGSEs based on access to *actual* nGSE participants, materials, and program structures. My examination of TEACH-NOW, as well as the other case study sites included in our nGSE study, produced differentiated, detailed, and nuanced understandings of this new approach to teacher preparation. None of these previous papers is an independent empirical study based on field research that includes access to practices, approaches, and participants' experiences at specific nGSE programs. Up until now, this kind of access has generally been unavailable to independent researchers. Thus, the lack of independent empirical research about the controversial and growing phenomenon of teacher preparation at nGSEs spoke to the need for my case study of TEACH-NOW, which was designed to produce an evidence-based and nuanced understanding of teacher preparation at a fully online nGSE.

Research on Fully Online Teacher Preparation

Most relevant to the work of my case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW is the existing empirical research on fully online teacher preparation. For the purposes of this review, teacher preparation programs were considered "fully online" if all instruction, coursework, and communication were delivered via the internet and other distance-based technologies. Thus, even if an online program included a face-to-face field component, but all of its instruction occurred online, the program was categorized as being fully online. Because the teacher preparation programs studied in this body of research align with TEACH-NOW's approach, my analysis provided key insights that informed the design and execution of my case study. Therefore, I have devoted the most space in this review to a systematic analysis of this second body of literature.

Peer-reviewed empirical research about fully online teacher preparation is relatively limited at this point in time. There are three groupings of research within the existing literature: 1) comparisons of fully online programs/candidates with face-to-face programs/candidates; 2) investigations of the experiences of teacher candidates or teacher educators in fully online programs; and 3) examinations of perceptions of candidates'/graduates' preparedness for teaching. Although a number of the 28 studies I examined fit into more than one of those groupings, each study was categorized based on its major focus as determined by a combination of its purpose, research questions, and findings. The sections that follow present the results of my analysis organized by the three groupings of research.

Fully online programs/candidates compared to face-to-face programs/candidates. Seven of the 28 studies reviewed compared fully online teacher preparation programs/candidates to more traditional face-to-face teacher preparation programs/candidates. The studies in this grouping focused mainly on examining the quality of fully online programs and the performance of their candidates.

The research problems of the seven studies in this group centered on the challenges associated with learning to teach. Specifically, each study was positioned as responding to the "complex and challenging task" (Chiero & Beare, 2010, p. 780) of preparing teacher candidates, and a number of studies paid particular attention to the importance of teacher preparation program quality in ensuring candidate readiness for P-12 classrooms (Chiero, Tracz, Marshall, Torgerson, & Beare, 2012; Daves & Roberts, 2010; Harrell & Harris, 2006; Heafner & Petty, 2016; Stricklin & Tingle, 2016). Along with framing learning to teach as a difficult endeavor, three of the studies (Chiero &

Beare, 2010; Heafner & Petty, 2016; Peterson & Bond, 2004) also pointed to how the growing popularity of online learning underscores the need for online preparation programs to ensure that they are not only preparing teacher candidates to negotiate the challenges associated with learning to teach, but are also preparing online candidates for "the real world of the classroom" (Peterson & Bond, 2004, p. 345).

Accordingly, the overarching purpose of the studies in this group was to examine the success of fully online programs in preparing their teacher candidates virtually for the very human work of P-12 teaching by comparing those programs and candidates with their face-to-face counterparts. With this purpose in mind, research questions ranged from specific questions about statistically significant differences between online and face-to-face candidates' licensure exam scores (e.g., Stricklin & Tingle, 2016) or learning experiences (Daves & Roberts, 2010) to broader questions about whether fully online programs can "provide future teachers with the knowledge and skills to meet current and future challenges in P-12 schools" (Chiero & Beare, 2010, p. 780). No matter the exact focus of their research questions, however, all of the studies in this group rested on the assumption that face-to-face programs/candidates are the benchmarks to which fully online programs/candidates should be held.

According to Chiero and Beare (2010), "As online and other forms of distance learning become ever more ubiquitous, the importance of identifying in what ways and under what circumstances it might be at least as effective as face-to-face instruction becomes increasingly important" (p. 781). That need to identify how online instruction could be *at least* as effective as face-to-face reflects an assumption that face-to-face environments—and in this case, face-to-face teacher preparation programs—represent the

standard for quality. Therefore, the studies here posited that analogous test scores or learning experiences among fully online and face-to-face teacher candidates serve as a form of quality assurance for online preparation programs. That need for quality assurance based on comparisons with face-to-face programs/candidates stems from ongoing concerns in the teacher education community about whether fully online programs can really prepare teachers as well as traditional brick-and-mortar programs. Along those lines, Heafner and Petty (2016) suggested that "within teacher education, skepticism exists as colleges of education question the validity and reliability of online programs to prepare teachers" (p. 154). Thus, the studies in this grouping aimed to address such skepticism by assuming that comparisons with face-to-face programs and candidates would provide valid evidence about the quality of fully online programs and candidates—a rather ironic approach given the current widespread critique of traditional teacher preparation programs I discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation.

In terms of findings and implications, the studies in this grouping began to challenge the skepticism surrounding fully online teacher preparation. Specifically, as shown below, the collective findings of this small grouping of research provided tentative support for the idea that fully online programs address the challenges associated with learning to teach at least as well as face-to-face programs, and thus offer quality preparation to their candidates.

Five of the seven studies pointed to how well the fully online programs they investigated provided teacher candidates with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed as teachers in P-12 schools. Specifically, the researchers found that candidates in fully online programs were highly satisfied with their learning experiences compared to

candidates in face-to-face programs (Harrell & Harris, 2006; Chiero et al., 2012) and/or were stronger academically than their face-to-face counterparts (Peterson & Bond, 2004). Furthermore, in one study, based on supervisors' evaluations of candidates' levels of preparedness, graduates of a fully online program received consistently higher ratings than graduates of campus-based programs (Chiero & Beare, 2010). Finally, Heafner and Petty's (2016) comparison of candidates' scores on edTPA revealed that online candidates demonstrated higher levels of preparedness than their face-to-face counterparts in instructional planning, assessments of student learning, and providing feedback.

Interestingly, even when online candidates did not outperform the face-to-face candidates to which they were compared, researchers in this group of studies found that the two preparation formats had a number of equivalencies (Heafner & Petty, 2016). For example, Stricklin and Tingle (2016) found a statistically significant difference in the Praxis II licensure exam scores of online and face-to-face candidates with face-to-face candidates scoring higher. However, their additional analysis of candidate survey responses revealed no statistically significant differences between the two groups in relation to candidates' perceptions of self-efficacy or their views on whether they were "capable of the actions that w[ould] positively impact student learning" (p. 195). Similarly, Daves and Roberts (2010) found that fully online and face-to-face candidates had comparable views of the social connectedness offered by their respective program formats and were equally satisfied with their experiences of learning to teach.

Finally, as described above, Heafner and Petty (2016) found online candidates outperformed face-to-face candidates on some aspects of edTPA. They also found,

however, that face-to-face candidates demonstrated higher levels of preparedness than their online counterparts on other aspects, specifically, instruction and student engagement. Yet despite varying outcomes on certain aspects of the assessment, overall, the researchers found no statistically significant difference between the summative edTPA rubric scores or in the average rubric mean scores of the two groups. That finding led them to conclude that the online program they investigated was "an equally effective platform as the [face-to-face] degree [program] when measuring candidate-learning outcomes using edTPA" (p.177). Combined, the findings of the seven studies in this category of research offer some support for the idea that fully online preparation addresses many of the challenges associated with learning to teach and succeeds in many ways in preparing candidates virtually for P-12 classrooms.

Investigations of the experiences of teacher candidates or teacher educators. The nine studies in the second grouping of research investigated the experiences of teacher candidates or teacher educators in fully online programs. By examining the nature of participants' experiences, this group of studies offers initial insights into the impact of the online teacher preparation phenomenon on some of those directly involved.

Four of the studies in this group centered on problems associated with the health and ongoing viability of the teaching education enterprise. Specifically, Downing and Dyment (2013) and Thornton (2013) positioned their studies in relation to the larger problem of obstacles, such as the affordability and accessibility of programs, which prospective teachers confront as they decide to enter preparation programs. Along somewhat similar lines, Denton et al. (2009) and Leader-Janssen, Nordness, Swain, & Hagaman (2016) situated their research in terms of the larger problems of teacher

shortages and attrition. The remaining five studies framed their research problems in relation to the rapid proliferation of online higher education and raised concerns about the impact of distance-based technologies on the program experiences of teacher candidates and teacher educators (Banegas & Manzur Busleiman, 2014; Cain & Phillip, 2013; Moss & Pittaway, 2013; Shelton, Hung, & Baughman, 2016; Tomte, Enochsson, Buskqvist, & Krstein, 2015).

Together, those two research problems—obstacles to program entry and the proliferation of online learning—reflect general concern about how online teacher preparation affects its participants and whether or not it can serve as a viable solution to the larger issues plaguing the teaching profession. As a result, the central purpose behind the studies in this group was to examine the experiences of participants in fully online teacher preparation by exploring how candidates or teacher educators understood their programs and made sense of their teaching and learning environments. Accordingly, the research questions posed in these nine studies asked about teacher educators' "experiences of preparing preservice teachers in an online environment" (Downing & Dyment, 2013, p. 99) or teacher candidates' "experiences of learning in an online environment" (Cain & Phillip, 2013, p. 305).

Underlying the problems, purpose, and questions presented in this grouping of research is the assumption that, as a technology-driven enterprise, fully online teacher preparation has a unique impact on its participants. Specifically, these studies highlighted concerns about online candidates' socialization into teaching and the trade-off between removing obstacles inhibiting program participation and reducing collegial and community-building experiences. As Leader-Janssen et al. (2016) explained, "Although

an online course may include much of the same course content and materials as an on-campus course, the method of instructional delivery and social interaction is entirely different" (p. 247). The studies in this group assumed that understanding how pedagogical and social differences influence participants' experiences would provide evidence as to whether or not fully online teacher preparation represents a potential solution to some of the most pressing issues facing teaching and teacher education.

On the whole, the findings of the nine studies in this grouping of research revealed two themes related to the experiences of the participants in the phenomenon of online teacher preparation. First, fully online teacher preparation required well-trained teacher educators who embrace the unique characteristics of online teaching and learning. Second, fully online teacher candidates expected their programs and teacher educators to provide flexible and supportive learning experiences. Together, those two themes highlight some of the specific needs and concerns of the phenomenon's participants and have implications for its continued expansion.

Successful online teacher preparation programs required effective and well-trained instructors. This finding was clear in five of the nine studies in this grouping of research (Downing & Dyment, 2013; Leader-Janssen et al., 2016; Moss & Pittaway, 2013; Thornton, 2013; Tomte et al., 2015). The need for well-trained instructors was voiced by teacher educators and teacher candidates alike. Downing and Dyment's study (2013) is very helpful here. They found that 81% of the teacher educators they surveyed believed that they themselves lacked the technological and pedagogical competence and confidence required to prepare teachers online successfully. Many of those teacher educators were also concerned about the overall appropriateness of online teacher

preparation. Specifically, they expressed worries related to student engagement and doubts about "the ability of the online environment to facilitate the development of the required characteristics of a good teacher" (p. 104). Based on these findings, Downing and Dyment recommended that teacher educators needed the time and resources to build the specific pedagogical skills required with online teaching. They also recommended that it was important that teacher educators adopt the "belief that rewarding teaching can occur in an online environment" (p. 106) by understanding that even though it has a different look and feel, online instruction can offer the same "intrinsic rewards" (p. 106) as face-to-face instruction.

Leader-Janssen and colleagues' (2016) research suggested one possibility for fostering the positive beliefs about the capacity of online teacher preparation that Downing and Dyment recommend. Leader-Janssen et al.'s examination of the experiences of teacher candidates in a fully online preparation program revealed that a majority of those candidates had favorable opinions of their teacher educators, whom they perceived as creating "an effective learning environment where knowledge and application of content occur" (p. 254). Leader-Janssen and colleagues suggested that the effectiveness of the teacher educators in the program they investigated may stem from the structured support systems in place for faculty including regular opportunities for feedback and discussion. Thus, their findings indicated that opportunities for collaboration among an online program's teacher educators might help those teacher educators come to believe that online teaching can be a satisfying and rewarding experience.

While teacher educators sought rewarding teaching experiences in online

preparation programs, teacher candidates sought flexible and supportive learning experiences. For example, Cain and Phillip (2013) found that flexibility was a major factor in fully online candidates' decisions to prepare for their profession virtually. As one participant interviewed for their study put it, "'I can do my own learning at my own time'" (p. 307). Along similar lines, in their investigation of the motivations of fully online teacher candidates, Banegas and Manzur Busleiman (2014) found that candidates desired learning conditions that allowed them to manage their own pace of study and to select their own learning strategies. In fact, the researchers found that candidates' desire for autonomy had the highest overall impact on their motivation to enroll and stay in the program studied.

Along with flexibility, the studies in this group suggest that fully online candidates also desire supportive learning environments. For example, by analyzing online teacher candidates' written narratives and interviews, Moss and Pittaway (2013) found that a number of challenges can impact candidates' learning experiences including negotiating family responsibilities and adjusting to school after long hiatuses from student life while also trying to build their professional identities as teachers. To create positive and supportive candidate learning experiences in the face of such challenges, the researchers suggested online teacher educators consider how they "might assist students to better align the distinctive experience of being an online student with the culturally embedded notions of how to engage with and enact the role" (p. 1016). In other words, candidates enrolled in online teacher preparation programs require support systems that acknowledge that learning to teach online is a different "cultural" experience than learning to teach in a face-to-face environment. That idea also emerged from Banegas

and Manzur Busleiman's (2014) study of the motivations of candidates enrolled in a fully online teacher preparation program. They focused on candidates' desire for autonomy, recommending that common pedagogical components found in face-to-face preparation programs should not be "imposed" automatically upon online candidates, but rather "negotiated" in order to allow candidates "to choose the processes, procedures, and instances" (p. 141) that support their specific needs as online learners.

Examinations of perceptions of candidates'/graduates' preparedness for teaching. Comprised of 12 studies, the largest grouping of research in this review sought to unpack the legitimacy of online teacher preparation by focusing on the perceptions of candidates or graduates regarding their preparedness to teach in P-12 schools. In other words, the studies here intended to assess whether or not fully online teacher preparation is an acceptable pathway into the teaching profession by exploring how it is viewed by specific groups.

The overarching research problem that animated this final group of studies was the fast-paced growth of teacher preparation delivered fully online coupled with the dearth of empirical evidence about its impact on P-12 schools. According to Adams, Lee, and Cortese (2012), "As the number of distance education programs leading to teacher certification increases, the question of whether employers will accept this new generation of teachers is a vitally important issue for the teaching profession" (p. 409). Consistent with this comment, a number of the researchers in this group of studies positioned their investigations in relation to how fully online teacher preparation is viewed and understood by those working in the P-12 sector (Adams et al., 2012; Faulk, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Faulk & King, 2013; Huss, 2007a, 2007b). Along somewhat similar lines, other

researchers pointed directly to a gap in the literature—we know relatively little about the readiness of teachers prepared fully online and their successes and failures as in-service teachers (Foster, Bishop, & Hernandez, 2008; Lacina, Mathews, & Nutt, 2011; McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2014; Schweizer, Hayslett, & Chaplock, 2008; Snyder, 2010).

With this general framing of the research problem, the chief purpose of the studies in this group was to examine candidates' actual preparedness to teach in order to assess the position and potential of fully online teacher preparation within the larger field of teacher education. In particular, the researchers in this third group aimed to examine the perceptions of school-based educators concerning the preparedness to teach of candidates who were educated in online programs. Research questions focused either on how those in the P-12 sector regarded the quality of fully online preparation programs/graduates or on how candidates/graduates from fully online programs viewed their own readiness to teach. For example, Huss (2007a) asked how P-12 educators "view the quality and legitimacy" (p. 3) of fully online preparation, and Schweizer et al. (2008) asked whether fully online programs "adequately prepare pre-service teachers to teach" (p. 14).

Underlying the problems and questions posed in this grouping of research was the assumption that exposing school-based educators' and/or graduates' perceptions of their preparedness to teach helps to validate or invalidate the quality and continued growth of the phenomenon. Specifically, it was assumed that the perceptions of P-12 administrators matter when it comes to the acceptance (or not) of fully online teacher preparation because those administrators often make teacher hiring decisions. As Huss (2007a) pointed out, "If principals who recommend new teachers for classroom positions are receptive to the online degree and view it no differently than a traditional degree, this

would establish and reinforce online education for schools and colleges of education" (p. 4). In addition, it was also assumed that candidates'/graduates' perceptions of their own preparedness could also support the expansion of fully online preparation. For example, McMahon and Dinan Thompson (2014) argued that positive perceptions from teacher candidates "demonstrat[e] the capacity for online learning in tertiary studies and in particular for Education subjects delivered online" (p. 131). Put simply, the studies here assumed that the acceptability of fully online teacher preparation as a legitimate pathway into the teaching profession hinges on how it is viewed by key groups.

There were two key findings across the studies in this group. First and most importantly, P-12 administrators and veteran teachers tended to view fully online teacher preparation as low quality and insufficient. Second, and in contrast, teacher candidates and graduates of fully online programs believed they were well-prepared to teach. The apparent contradiction between the viewpoints of candidates/graduates and P-12 administrators and veteran teachers about the quality of fully online teacher preparation is very interesting and very important. It may suggest biases related to positionality—that is, those involved in online teacher preparation believe in it, but those familiar only with more traditional forms of preparation doubt its legitimacy as an acceptable pathway into the teaching profession. However, this finding may also have implications for graduates of fully online programs as it may impact their ability to get hired for teaching positions.

The findings of seven of the 12 studies in this group indicated that P-12 administrators (Adams et al., 2012; Faulk, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Huss, 2007a, 2007b), as well as veteran in-service teachers (Faulk & King, 2013), had negative perceptions about the ability of fully online programs to produce qualified and effective teachers. For

example, Adams and colleagues' (2012) survey study found that in their roles as hiring managers, principals preferred teacher candidates who completed face-to-face coursework. Furthermore, the researchers found that principals voiced frequent concern about the quality of online coursework. Similarly, Huss (2007a) found that only one out of the 75 middle school principals surveyed "would choose an online candidate over a traditional candidate if the other variables were believed to be equal" (p. 8) suggesting doubt about the quality of fully online teacher preparation.

Faulk (2010) uncovered some of the specific concerns P-12 administrators had about the readiness of teachers prepared online. In a survey of superintendents and principals, Faulk found that a majority believed teachers prepared online were ill-equipped in the areas of classroom management, diversity and special needs, and the social aspects of teaching. Reflecting the trepidation many of those surveyed had about hiring teachers who had been prepared online, one administrator explained, "Nothing can replace the discussion and collaboration of a good classroom experience. While online may be fine for some courses I hope I never have to hire someone trained primarily online" (p. 25). Another administrator expressed doubts about the motivation level of teachers prepared online stating, "I have a hard time accepting that a teacher will be able to motivate, manage, and deal with all of our students yet could not find the initiative to attend class at [a] campus nearby" (p. 26).

All seven of the studies that focused on administrators and in-service teachers found that they had negative perceptions about teachers prepared fully online. However, as noted earlier, the five studies that focused on the perceptions of online teacher candidates/graduates had very different findings. Each of those five studies (Foster et al.,

2008; Lacina et al., 2011; McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2014; Schweizer et al., 2008; Snyder, 2010) indicated that candidates/graduates felt well-prepared and satisfied with their training. For example, Snyder (2010) found that of all the graduates of an online reading teacher preparation program who were surveyed, nearly 75% said the program was effective or extremely effective in preparing them for literacy instruction. McMahon and Dinan Thompson (2014) had similar findings in their study of health and physical education (HPE) teacher candidates' perceptions of their readiness with a majority expressing that they felt "ready" or "very ready" to teach. As one candidate explained, "I am ready. I have no fear in relation to teaching HPE. I am looking forward to the challenge" (p. 127).

Interestingly, although their investigations focused mainly on graduates of fully online programs, two of the five studies (Foster et al., 2008; Schweizer et al., 2008) also explored the views of the direct supervisors of those graduates. And when compared to the findings of the seven studies that focused *explicitly* on P-12 educators detailed above, the findings of these two studies are both surprising and significant. In contrast to the seven studies above, the P-12 leaders in these two studies believed that the online graduates they worked with were well or adequately prepared to teach. Specifically, Schweizer et al. (2008) found that the principals of the three program completers included in their study "expressed satisfaction with the new teachers and commented that they felt fortunate to have them" (p. 21). Along similar lines, Foster et al. (2008) found that 95% of the 84 employment supervisors they surveyed indicated that the online program graduates with whom they worked were "well or adequately prepared to know and understand the subjects of the curriculum at his/her grade level" (p. 19). It is critical

to acknowledge that the supervisor satisfaction reflected in the findings of these two studies not only because it diverged with the findings of the studies that focused explicitly on the perceptions of P-12 educators, but also because it tentatively suggested that direct interaction with online program graduates may lead to better perceptions of those graduates as teachers.

Connection to TEACH-NOW case study. The findings and implications of this body of literature suggested that as the field of initial teacher education continues to evolve beyond the time and distance constraints of traditional brick-and-mortar preparation programs, the ongoing exploration and interrogation of the impact of distance-based technologies on teacher preparation programs remain critical. My dissertation represented an opportunity for such ongoing exploration. Below, I connect each group of studies to my case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW.

To begin, my analysis revealed that the first group—comparisons of fully online programs/candidates with face-to-face programs/candidates—offered only a partial understanding of the phenomenon. Without question, comparisons of candidates' standardized licensure exam scores and survey responses conducted mainly through statistical analyses provide some evidence about fully online program quality and candidate preparedness. However, the seven comparison studies in that group did not account for who chooses which program format or for the ways particular candidates interact with and make sense of the opportunities offered in different preparation programs. Therefore, by not exploring possible variations in the dispositions, interests, sense-making, and prior experiences of fully online teacher candidates, these studies offered only limited insight into the phenomenon. My case study of teacher preparation at

TEACH-NOW aimed to begin to address that limited insight by examining the backgrounds and experiences of teacher candidates and graduates including their reasons for choosing TEACH-NOW, perceptions of learning, and sense of preparedness. Furthermore, if it is understood (as my research team assumes) that learning to teach is a challenging task, research based on a wider variety of data sources is necessary in order to illuminate the practices online programs employ in order to negotiate that challenge. As I detail in Chapter Three, my case study of TEACH-NOW involved a wide variety of data sources that enabled me to gain insight into the understandings and assumptions of those involved.

The second group of studies—investigations of the experiences of teacher candidates or teacher educators in fully online programs—revealed some of the social and pedagogical issues involved in fully online teacher preparation and provided insight into how participants experienced and understood their programs. In terms of teacher educators involved in online teacher preparation programs, the studies indicated that we need to know much more about what a positive and productive instructional environment looks like for teacher educators working in fully online programs. As for teacher candidates, the studies in this group made it clear that online preparation needs to be viewed as having its own unique culture and characteristics. In order to support students' individual needs as online learners and their desire for flexibility, programs are faced with the challenge of providing learning environments that are supportive and accommodating while also ensuring that candidates are well-prepared for their careers as teachers. Thus, in my research at TEACH-NOW, I explored the program's specific practices and pedagogies in order to understand the social, learning, and teaching

experiences of its teacher candidates and teacher educators alike.

Finally, the third group of studies—examinations of perceptions of the preparedness of fully online candidates/graduates—revealed an interesting tension: On the whole, P-12 administrators did not perceive teachers who had been prepared online positively. In contrast, those who were themselves prepared online believed they were well-prepared and ready to teach. While my case study of TEACH-NOW did not explore the perceptions of P-12 administrators, my interviews with TEACH-NOW graduates added to our understanding of program completers' perceptions of preparedness as well as shed more light on their in-service teaching experiences.

Overall, my examination of the existing empirical research on fully online teacher preparation revealed the tendency of researchers to focus on a particular aspect of the phenomenon related to format, candidate/faculty experiences, or perceptions of candidates/graduates. My dissertation represented a break from that narrow approach by providing a deep but broad exploration of not only the program's e-learning experience, but also the understandings and assumptions of an array of participants from leaders to teacher educators to teacher candidates. In addition, unlike most of the existing literature, which examines university-connected online programs, my research investigated TEACH-NOW as a fully online preparation program at an nGSE unaffiliated with a university of any kind—brick-and-mortar or online.

Research on Synchronous Online Classes in Higher Education

The body of literature on the use of technology in educational settings is broad and covers numerous advancements and applications (e.g., Kidd & Morris, 2017; Nafukho & Irby, 2015; Rushby & Surry, 2016; Zhang, 2015). While it is true that many

aspects of the field educational technology connected to my case study, it was appropriate to focus on a major technological aspect of TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation—required synchronous class sessions conducted via the videoconferencing platform Zoom. TEACH-NOW called these sessions "virtual classes."

Drawing on the definitions put forth by Martin, Parker, and Deale (2012) and Karal, Cebi, and Turgut (2011), I defined "synchronous online classes" as online environments that allow instructors and students to engage in real-time visual and voice communication via videoconferencing technology. Due to TEACH-NOW's use of Zoom, all of the articles included in my review addressed the use of *videoconferencing* technologies in online classes at institutions of higher education. Thus, I did not include examinations or discussions of text-based synchronous communication (e.g., live blogs, chat rooms, or discussion forums), although they informed my general understanding of the application of synchronous technologies in online learning environments. My analysis of the 21 studies and program descriptions I located revealed two groups: 1) explorations of the perceptions or experiences of students; and 2) examinations or descriptions of the practices or experiences of instructors.

Explorations of the perceptions or experiences of students. Eleven articles reported on the perceptions or experiences of in synchronous online classes. All of the articles in this grouping were empirical research. By examining students' perceptions or experiences, this group of studies provided insight into how online learners view the purpose, form, and function of synchronous class sessions.

The research problems of the studies in this group centered on the continued expansion of e-learning and the growing popularity of synchronous communication

technologies. As Bailie (2015) pointed out, "When one considers the steady enrollment growth over the past decades, coupled with greater acceptance within the academic community, it is broadly apparent that online education is here to stay" (p. 2). Malczyk (2018) extended that idea by also emphasizing how most tertiary-level students grew up with a close relationship to technology. Thus, given the apparent permanence of online education and students' familiarity with technology, the overarching purpose of the studies in this group was to examine students' receptivity to and understanding of synchronous video sessions.

Five of the studies used face-to-face and/or asynchronous online classes as points of comparison to the perceptions or experiences of students in courses that included synchronous video sessions (Ge, 2012; Giesbers, Rienties, Tempelaar, & Gijselaers, 2014; Malczyk, 2018; Olson & McCracken, 2015; Skylar, 2009). The other six studies investigated courses with synchronous online classes as standalone experiences (Bailie, 2015; Falloon, 2011; Karal et al., 2011; McBrien, Jones, & Cheng, 2009; McDaniels, Pfund, & Bamicle, 2016; Martin et al., 2012). Despite the two different approaches taken by the researchers in this grouping, one central finding emerged across the 11 studies— although students in synchronous online classes reported generally positive perspectives or experiences, they also identified drawbacks and limitations to the format.

In terms of students' generally positive perspectives or experiences, the researchers highlighted improved student learning/performance (Bailie, 2015; Ge, 2012; Skylar, 2009), comfort/flexibility (Karal et al., 2011; Malczyk, 2018; McBrien et al., 2009), and interaction/community-building (Falloon, 2011; Giesbers et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2012; McDaniels et al., 2016) as key elements in shaping those positive

viewpoints. Illustrative of the positive impact synchronous online classes can have on student learning, Ge (2012) found that students in an online English course that used synchronous class sessions outperformed students whose course did not include such sessions. Furthermore, survey data indicated that students believed the incorporation of synchronous class sessions helped to improve their English-speaking abilities. Similarly, Skylar (2009) found preservice teachers enrolled in online courses who were exposed to both synchronous video lectures and asynchronous text-based lectures, preferred the video lecture sessions and felt the format improved their understanding of course materials.

Representative of students' positive perspectives as they relate to the comfort/flexibility afforded by synchronous online classes, Karal et al. (2011) examined interviews and observation data to research the perceptions of nine university undergraduates participating in a course with synchronous classes for the first time and found that the students noted the time-saving qualities, comfort, and flexibility the format offered. Along similar lines, Malczyk (2018) completed a case study of a pilot, three-week "multimodal" university course on social policies and programs. The multimodal nature of the course meant that students experienced the course in three ways: face-to-face, synchronously online via the videoconferencing platform Zoom, and through the completion of asynchronous online assignments. The 22 students enrolled were required to spend a week in each of the three modalities. At the end of the course, 14 students completed an open-ended survey identifying the strengths and limitations of each modality. In terms of their experiences taking the course synchronously online using

Zoom, the students identified a number of strengths including flexibility, time-savings benefits, and the ability to participate in class activities in real-time.

As for students' perspectives on interaction/community-building in online courses that include synchronous classes, by examining interview, survey, and course archival data, Martin et al. (2012) found that students in three online courses taught by the same instructor had positive views of their real-time interactions with their classmates and that instructor. In addition, using content analysis of discussion boards among other data sources, Giesbers et al. (2014) found that students who participated in voluntary synchronous sessions contributed more to asynchronous discussions than students who did not participate in those sessions. Along similar lines, in their examination of the experiences of 39 graduate and post-doc students enrolled in an online course that included synchronous classes, McDaniels et al. (2016) found that the students viewed the e-learning environment positively and felt they fostered meaningful connections with their fellow students as well as their instructors. Based on those findings, McDaniels and colleagues posited, "This outcome challenges the myth that online education is more impersonal than face-to-face instruction" (p. 120).

Interestingly, while the findings of McDaniels et al. (2016) may challenge the myth that face-to-face teaching is the gold standard for instruction in educational settings, the findings of a number of other studies in this group suggested that synchronous online classes present numerous drawbacks and limitations for students. From dislike of the compulsory use of webcams (Bailie, 2015) to the unpredictability of real-time video (Olson & McCracken, 2015) to feelings of confusion and over-stimulation (McBrien et al., 2009), students' views of and experiences in courses that include synchronous classes

are not always entirely positive. For example, although as mentioned above, the participants in Karal et al.'s (2011) study noted the time-saving qualities, comfort, and flexibility of the format, the participants also listed a number of disadvantages including: weak teacher/student communication, difficulties with motivation, technical problems, lack of command on the part of the instructor, and the lure of outside distractions like cell phones. Likewise, while the participants in Malczyk's (2018) "multimodal" case study had some positive views of the format, they also identified a number of limitations including difficulties interacting, technology issues related to sound quality and internet reliability, and diminished personal connections. In addition, a majority of the students in Malczyk's study reported that they preferred the course in a traditional face-to-face setting.

Olson and McCracken (2015) argued that including synchronous lectures into an e-learning environment is "not a magic bullet" (p. 81), meaning it will not automatically foster a shared sense of community among participants. Despite the fact that some of the studies in this group suggested that the format can create positive experiences for students, others helped to support Olson and McCracken's more negative viewpoint. Thus, overall, the existing research on the perceptions or experiences of students in online courses that use synchronous classes raised questions about what students expect and value when they participate in an e-learning environment and how those expectations and values influence their perspectives and experiences.

Examinations or descriptions of the practices or experiences of instructors.
Ten articles examined instructors' practices or experiences in online courses that included synchronous classes. The articles in this grouping represented a mix of empirical research

studies (Aydemir, Kursun, & Karaman, 2016; Bower, 2011; Fasso, 2013; Martin & Parker, 2014; Morrison, 2011; Wagner, Enders, Pirie, & Thomas, 2016; Wang, Chen, & Levy, 2010) and program descriptions (Acosta-Tello, 2015; Heiser, Stickler, & Furnborough, 2013; Kreie, Johnson, & Lebsock, 2017). By exploring or describing instructors' practices or experiences, this group of studies provided insight into how those tasked with teaching in synchronous classes understand and enact their work.

Similar to the first group of studies, the articles in this group were situated within the concurrent expansion of both online education and synchronous communication technologies. In particular, the authors of these pieces highlighted the need for institutions of higher education to keep pace with technological advancements. As Acosta-Tello (2015) suggested, "Institutions of higher education consider the delivery of online instruction critical to the survival of their institutions as these classes have become the preferred mode of instruction for many students" (p. 2). The collective goal of these studies was to examine and/or draw attention to effective teaching practices for synchronous e-learning environments. My analysis revealed that there was one finding that cut across nine of the 10 studies—in order to maximize the potential of synchronous class sessions to foster a positive e-learning experience, instructors needed to understand its capabilities and be supported in their use of the format.

Helping to demonstrate the capability of instructors in synchronous online classes to create productive e-learning environments for their students, Wagner et al. (2016) provided an overview of the design and practices employed in the use of a videoconferencing platform in a fully online undergraduate business degree program. Based on their analysis of student course evaluations, faculty surveys, and interviews

with both students and faculty, the researchers found that videoconferencing helped to build rapport between faculty and students. As one of their faculty participants explained, "I have always felt there was something missing in online learning, and with the videoconferences I feel as though the void has been filled. The missing component was the relationship built through interactions beyond email communication" (p. 167). The research team also found that synchronous sessions helped to maintain academic integrity in fully online classes in that it helped to prevent deceptive practices such as identity-swapping, plagiarism, and cheating because as one faculty member interviewed put it, "Instead of grading assignments in robot mode one after another, I can link the student to their work as a result of having spoken with them face to face" (p. 169).

As the findings of Wagner et al. (2016) indicated, instructors of synchronous class sessions were able to appreciate the format and use it to build positive experiences for themselves and their students. Acosta-Tello (2015) extended this positive viewpoint and argued, "The energy of the instructor is easily transmitted through [a] synchronous platform, engaging students, approximating more closely the ambiance of a traditional classroom" (p. 2). Despite Acosta-Tello's assertion and the findings of Wagner et al., however, other studies in this group indicated that the "ease" with which instructors fostered students' "energy" varied. Wang et al. (2010) underscored that point:

> Unlike teachers in campus-based teaching, who can refer to the ways they have been taught in schools, teachers new to online teaching and learning tend to feel more anxious and uncertain as the online environment differs, sometimes in unexpected ways, from the campus-based one in which they have been taught or in which they now teach. (278)

To alleviate feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, Wang et al. recommended that professional development for instructors new to synchronous online classes focus on building competency and comfort with the format. Bower (2011) and Fasso (2013) drew similar conclusions with Bower highlighting the importance of developing instructors' technical competencies and Fasso suggesting the use of faculty mentors.

Five articles offered specific tips and best practices for instruction in synchronous e-learning environments (Acosta-Tello, 2015; Aydemir et al., 2016; Heiser et al., 2013; Kreie et al., 2017; Martin & Parker, 2014). For example, Martin and Parker (2014) suggested offering support to instructors through workshops, faculty expert presentations, and peer groups and recommend that faculty use synchronous online classes to foster discussion and debate of asynchronous coursework, host guest speakers, and "facilitate dialogue in addition to content delivery" (p. 203). Similarly, Kreie et al. (2017) recommended that instructors request technical assistance from teaching assistants or others, connect assignments directly to the curricular content of synchronous sessions, and use breakout sessions to foster student interaction. Overall, the articles in this group that promoted professional development or shared best practices assumed that synchronous online classes can offer positive and effective e-learning experiences.

Interestingly, one study in this group questioned the above assumption and provided an important and interesting contrast. In a practitioner-based inquiry of her own instruction in a synchronous online graduate-level seminar, Morrison (2011) investigated her ability to "create a highly interactive synchronous course—rich in linear discussion, small-group activities, and a strong sense of community" (p. 270). Over a two-semester period, Morrison maintained written reflections of her teaching and also administered an

end-of-course online survey to her students. Based on her own experience and the responses of her students to the survey, Morrison found that she was able to create a highly interactive synchronous course using Adobe Connect. However, Morrison also found the format produced a number of obstacles that impacted community-building. Like a number of other studies reviewed in the first grouping, Morrison and her students encountered frustrating technical glitches including audio and visual problems. In addition, they also cited difficulty in engaging in coherent class discussions. Overall, Morrison's experience led her to conclude that even if an online synchronous class is highly interactive, it is not as effective as face-to-face seminars. She argued, "The importance of the human factor that comes with physical presence cannot be denied even though it is largely intangible. Should convenience really trump quality of human interactions?" (p. 272).

By asking that provocative question, Morrison (2011) revealed an important tension when it comes to online synchronous classes in higher education—even if instructors (and students) embrace the format and laud its positive characteristics, does it truly measure up to traditional, face-to-face learning environments? And pushing back on Morrison's assertion from an even more abstract level, what makes "human interactions" real? Must they occur in physical spaces as Morrison seemed to posit or can they occur in digital spaces? These questions underscore the importance of continued exploration into e-learning environments and how participants understand and value the connections to others that they make in those environments.

Connection to TEACH-NOW case study. The 21 articles on the use of synchronous online classes in higher education offered helpful insight into a major

component of TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program—its use of mandatory synchronous class sessions. My review of this research revealed three key considerations for my case study, particularly as it related to data generation.

Overall, the findings of the studies in the first group suggested that although tertiary-level students in synchronous online classes may have positive experiences, they do not come without drawbacks. Thus, in my investigation of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW, I worked to understand how candidates perceived and experienced the program's learning conditions. In particular, I was attentive as to whether or not TEACH-NOW's teacher candidates reported some of the limitations and drawbacks discussed in the literature and how they framed those limitations and drawbacks in relation to their view of the program, its use of synchronous online classes, and their own preparedness for the work of teaching.

Similarly, the articles in the second group suggested that it was important to attend to the experiences of TEACH-NOW's teacher educators as they related to instruction in synchronous classes. Specifically, the literature indicated that professional development and instructional support are necessary for faculty teaching exclusively in virtual classrooms. This suggested that in interviews with the program's teacher educators and in my observations of their virtual classes, it was important to explore how the teacher educators navigated the e-learning environment, whether or not they received instructional support from the institution, and whether or not the teacher educators I interacted with had past experience teaching virtually.

Taking a step back from the specific ways in which this body of literature informed my thinking in terms of data generation, it is important to note that my

qualitative case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW helped to begin to address the larger questions that emerged from my analysis. In particular, pairing Olson and McCracken's (2015) view that synchronous classes are not "magic bullet[s]" (p. 81) with Morrison's (2011) concerns about the lack of "physical presence" (p. 272) afforded by the format, indicated the need for more research in order to further understand the utility and potential of synchronous online classes in higher education on the whole and in teacher preparation, specifically. Thus, by working to understand both the expectations of TEACH-NOW's candidates and instructors in relation to the program's use of synchronous online classes, my research contributed new lines of thinking to the body of literature reviewed here.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, Turkle (2017) argues that current digital technologies "provide space for the emergence of a new state of the self, itself, split between screen and the physical real, wired into existence through technology" (p. 16). This notion of splitting, of division, of dislocation, emerged a number of times throughout the preceding review of the literature. First, nGSEs, themselves, represent the dislocation of teacher preparation from the traditional university setting, and with that dislocation, comes a stark divide between the proponents and the critics of the phenomenon. That divide has resulted in the positioning of nGSEs as either a much-needed innovation or a worrisome threat to the field of teacher preparation. Second, the emergence of fully online teacher preparation has given rise to a new type of teacher candidate, one who must negotiate a perceived divide between learning to teach on the screen but then actually teaching in the "physical real." That division between the space in which the preparation for a profession

occurs and the space in which the profession must later be enacted has led to differing opinions about the quality and preparedness of the graduates of fully online programs. Lastly, synchronous online classes require students and instructors to believe that digital interaction that occurs in real-time can effectively bridge the physical distance between them. While the research suggested that students are mostly open to the notion that their experiences in virtual classes are "wired into existence through technology," instructors appear split over the idea.

Combined, the splits and divisions reflected in the research examined above suggested that more study of these important educational innovations is needed. My case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW presented the opportunity to do just that. This case study produced an evidence-based and nuanced understanding of two intersecting and understudied phenomena—nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation— while also offering additional insight into the use of innovative e-learning technologies in higher education.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methods

In Chapter One, I outlined how a convincing and robust failure narrative plagues the field of initial teacher education in the United States. I showed that it was within that contentious landscape that both nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation programs emerged to compete with "traditional" college- and university-based preparation programs. Then, in Chapter Two, I reviewed related literature and suggested that there is a dearth of independent research on nGSEs as well as a limited amount of in-depth knowledge about fully online teacher preparation programs. Combined, my overview of the shifting landscape of teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith, 2017) and the related literature demonstrate the significance of the work of this dissertation—a study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW, an institution that represents the intersection of nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation. Guided by a theoretical framework that draws on Garrison's (2003, 2011, 2017) theory for understanding e-learning experiences in higher education and Turkle's (2011, 2015, 2017) notions related to human-technology relationships, this study investigated the phenomenon of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW based on the perspectives of various TEACH-NOW participants. Intended to be descriptive and interpretive, the goal of this study was to depict and theorize how teacher preparation was conceptualized and enacted at TEACH-NOW and how its teacher candidates experienced that conceptualization and enactment.

Given the aims of the study (as well as those of the larger nGSE study), a qualitative case study was the most appropriate research design. Qualitative research was well-suited for a study of how teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW is understood and

enacted by its participants because, as Tracy (2013) suggests, qualitative research: "is rich and holistic; offers more than a snapshot—provides understanding of a sustained process; focuses on lived experience, placed in its context; [and] honors participants' local meanings" (p. 23). Furthermore, rooted in the constructivist paradigm, case study research "ensures that [an] issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). Thus, a qualitative case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW allowed for a rich, contextual understanding of the phenomenon based on multiple perspectives and experiences.

Definition of Case Study Research

Given that it represents "both *a process* of inquiry and *the product* of that inquiry" (Stake, 2006, p. 8, emphasis added), there is wide disagreement among qualitative researchers about the meaning and components of case study research (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). The duality of process and product can be confusing, and it is made even more unclear by the fact that according to Stake (2006), "Here and there, researchers will call anything they please a case study" (p. 8). To avoid these problems, in what follows, I clarify the definition of case study research used in this study and elaborate on my argument that a case study design was most appropriate for this work.

Yin's (2014) comprehensive definition of case study research has two parts—the *scope* of a case study and the *features* of a case study. The *scope* of a case study positions it as an empirical inquiry based on the in-depth examination of a current phenomenon (i.e., the case) within its "real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). The concept of *scope* is based on the assumption that the phenomenon under investigation in a case study is

deeply connected to its contextual conditions and thus, requires that research is conducted in the field. The emphasis on context and depth situates case study research in contrast to other approaches in which the context is controlled (e.g., experimental research) or the investigation is limited to particular aspects of a phenomenon (e.g., survey research) (Yin, 2014).

The *features* of a case study, meanwhile, address the methodological aspects of the inquiry. According to Yin (2014), with a case study inquiry there "will be many more variables of interest than data points" (p. 17). Therefore, the researcher needs to generate data from multiple sources of evidence. Furthermore, Yin (2014) asserts that case study research benefits from the inclusion of "theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 17). Overall, the second part of Yin's definition highlights how case study research represents inquiry into a complex phenomenon with numerous areas of interest and thus, calls for a number of data sources, data analysis through triangulation, and the development of a theoretical framework to guide the research.

Now that I have outlined the understanding of case study research with which I operated, I want to return to my assertion that a qualitative case study design was the most appropriate research approach for this dissertation. As noted, teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW represents the convergence of two contemporary phenomena—nGSEs and online teacher preparation. To effectively investigate that convergence and gain insight into teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW, what was needed was an in-depth examination that accounted for the real-world context within which the institution operated, thus honoring participants' local meanings and experiences. In this sense, my research fit the *scope* of a case study. Furthermore, the *features* of a case study outlined

above provided guidance that allowed me to generate and interpret a variety of data in a way that led to a rich understanding of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW considered through multiple lenses.

The Case Study Site: Selection and Overview

The larger nGSE study involves examinations of teacher preparation at four nGSEs, each regarded as a "case" of our phenomenon of interest. The four case study sites were purposefully selected for maximum variation (Patton, 2005) (e.g., in size, location, funders, founders, goals/mission, history, partners, and demographic characteristics) but also to allow identification of common patterns cutting across variations. A pilot case study of the Match Teacher Residency program at the Sposato GSE was conducted in 2016-2017, and a case study of teacher education at High Tech High was conducted in 2017-2019. My case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW represents the third site. We are in the midst of data generation at the fourth site, the MAT program in Earth Science at the Richard Gilder Graduate School at the American Museum of Natural History. We are also currently engaged in preliminary cross-case analysis, which we plan to conclude in 2020.

Given that the goal of the larger study is understanding teacher preparation at nGSEs and in light of the fact that four cases were selected for variation, we have found that the phenomenon of teacher preparation at nGSEs is neither monolithic nor uniform. Rather, we suggest that there are important similarities as well as differences across sites. Thus, each case study site represents an "intrinsic" (Stake, 2006) case, interesting and significant in its own right; it is also "instrumental" (Stake, 2006) in that each will help

our research team to understand features of the broader nGSE phenomenon beyond the individual case itself.

TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education

At the time of this study, the goal of the online, for-profit TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education was to "prepare tomorrow's teachers for tomorrow's learners in tomorrow's learning world" (TEACH-NOW, 2018a, para. 4) by offering streamlined and cost-effective preparation programs to prospective teachers around the world. As I describe in more detail in Chapter Four, TEACH-NOW began as a small certification-only program in late 2011, but quickly evolved into a licensed and accredited institution of higher education. TEACH-NOW offered two preparation options for teacher candidates: a 9-month certification-only program that costs $6000 and a 12-month certification plus M.Ed. program that costs $13,000 (TEACH-NOW, 2018c). The institution offered candidates licensure in dozens of subject areas ranging from secondary English and math to elementary art and physical education. The program employed a cohort model with 12-15 candidates per cohort and multiple new cohorts enrolling monthly. As a fully online nGSE, TEACH-NOW relied on its proprietary online platform to deliver a series of online activity-based modules taken in sequence. Candidates logged on to the platform to access their coursework, learning resources, and weekly synchronous virtual classes hosted using the videoconferencing software Zoom. The certification-only program was comprised of eight modules, while the certification plus degree program was comprised of eleven. The eighth module in both programs was a face-to-face clinical experience (TEACH-NOW, 2018d).

It is important to note that TEACH-NOW was an equal opportunity employer and

education provider and complied with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family

Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and the Student Right-to-Know Act (*Catalog and

Candidate Handbook*). As an online entity, TEACH-NOW's privacy policy was publicly

available on its homepage and detailed the institution's information collection processes

including its use cookies and user information as well as its third-party relationships

(TEACH-NOW, 2018a). Students' grades and transcripts were stored on the institution's

learning platform and included written work, digital submissions, and other assessments

(*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*).

Based on a written agreement from the leaders of TEACH-NOW to participate as

a case study in the larger nGSE study and as my dissertation case study site, I was

granted full access to TEACH-NOW's online learning platform and permission to

interview TEACH-NOW instructors, candidates, and graduates. Finally, in terms of

conceptualizing my research at TEACH-NOW as a "bounded case" (Yin, 2014), my

study focused explicitly on the *teacher preparation program* at TEACH-NOW. In the

section below, I provide a detailed overview of specifically who and what I examined in

order to investigate the phenomenon of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW.

Data Generation

Several preliminary meetings and communications with TEACH-NOW occurred

in 2016-2017, including one face-to-face meeting in December 2016 at TEACH-NOW's

Washington, D.C. headquarters. Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Principal Investigator of the

larger nGSE study and chair of this dissertation, and I participated in an initial face-to-

face meeting and in follow-up calls and emails. The official data generation period for the

case study began in February 2018 and ended in December 2018. Generally, gathering of documents and a majority of the interviews came earlier in the data generation period with the observations occurring in the later stages. The computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program, Dedoose, was used to store and maintain the "data corpus" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 48) under password protection.

Program administrators, faculty members, mentors, teacher candidates, and graduates were invited to be participants in the case study. Program administrators aided me in recruiting other participants. Administrators included program leaders such as TEACH-NOW's founder/chief executive officer, chief learning officer, and vice president of academic affairs. Faculty members represented the instructors who taught in the preparation program, some of whom also served as virtual mentors to teacher candidates or in administrative roles. In addition, a purposive sample (Miles et al., 2014) of teacher candidates was constructed to include a diverse set of perspectives (in terms of subject matter specialty area, previous education background, or grade level taught). Finally, a small purposive sample of program graduates was also interviewed.

Generating Data Online

While it may seem to some that conducting qualitative research online is no different from traditional face-to-face inquiry, Baym and Markham (2009) suggest that "[t]he internet changes the way we understand and conduct qualitative inquiry" (p. viii). As a dynamic and ever-shifting landscape, the internet requires researchers to "comprehend and heed the lessons learned by previous generations of researchers while understanding the need for flexible adaptation, a process of reconsideration without reinvention" (p. ix). Thus, I referred to literature related to conducting qualitative

research online (e.g., Hine, 2000, 2015; Markham & Baym, 2009; Salmons, 2016) to inform my discussion of data sources and methods for generation data at TEACH-NOW.

Because I aimed to study TEACH-NOW in its "real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16), my case study was conducted almost exclusively online in order to better understand participants' experiences in a fully online teacher preparation program "wired into existence through technology" (Turkle, 2017, p. 16). Doing so reflects a view of the internet as a "communicative social space" (Orgad, 2009, p. 36) as opposed to simply a "medium." Studies that focus on the internet as a general medium investigate its impact in offline contexts such as the home or other settings of internet users (Orgad, 2009). Meanwhile, studies that view the internet as constituting a communicative social space position it as having "inherent cultural coherence that is internally meaningful and understandable in its own terms" (Orgad, 2009, p. 36). Both of these viewpoints (as well as a viewpoint that combines the two) can and have led to important internet-related empirical research (Hine, 2000, 2015). In my study of TEACH-NOW, I worked from the perspective that online environments are communicative social spaces for two key reasons. First, due to the fact TEACH-NOW's participants (candidates, instructors, and graduates alike) were located around the world, it was outside the capacity of this study to include an exploration of the physical settings in which participants interacted with the TEACH-NOW platform. Second and more importantly, given the teacher preparation program at TEACH-NOW existed in an online environment, it made sense to take the view that TEACH-NOW's digital space was meaningful and understandable (Orgad, 2009) to its participants. Thus, the study relied primarily on data sources generated online.

To characterize the sources of data I generated for my case study of TEACH-NOW, I combined Orgad's (2009) definition of *online data* with Salmons' (2016) typologies. Orgad (2009) defines *online data* as "materials obtained using what have been often described as virtual methodologies: methods implemented by and through the internet" (p. 35). A vast majority of the materials I generated from and about TEACH-NOW were obtained by and through the internet via email, videoconferencing, and on websites (both publicly available sites and privately accessed, password-protected sites). More specifically, those data fell into two typologies of online data as defined by Salmons (2016)—*extant* data and *elicited* data. *Extant online data* are materials that exist online "without any intervention or influence by the researcher" (p. 7). Examples include the following: texts, messages/posts, sounds, and images included on websites and platforms; documents stored and shared on cloud-based servers; and recordings of synchronous and asynchronous online events. Online data of this nature are generated by "adapting" (Salmons, 2016, p. 7) traditional qualitative methods such as observation and document analysis for an online environment. *Elicited online data*, on the other hand, involves a researcher's direct interaction with participants, which allows that researcher to "probe in ways not possible with extant data" (Salmons, 2016, p. 8). Examples include participant observations in online spaces (e.g., synchronous class sessions), synchronous video exchange (e.g., participant interviews conducted using videoconferencing software), and synchronous and asynchronous text-based communication (e.g., emails and electronic chat sessions). By thinking of the data sources for this case study in the manner described here, my intention was to acknowledge the unique online context of TEACH-NOW and attend to its existence as a primarily digital entity.

Data Sources

        As discussed earlier, case study research involves multiple sources of evidence,

which allow for triangulation and strengthen the construct validity of the inquiry (Yin,

2014). Thus, this case study was based on multiple data sources, including documents,

online materials, interviews, and observations. Table 1 provides an overview of the

specific data sources that were generated for this case study. A detailed explanation of

each follows the table.

Table 1

Summary of Data Sources and Study Participants

Sources	Description	Totals
Extant Online Data		
Documents/Materials	*Handbooks/Manuals* *-2018-19 TEACH-NOW Catalog and Candidate Handbook* *-2018-2019 Mentor Handbook* *-2018-2019 Clinical Practice Handbook* *-Curriculum Development Manual* *-Faculty Handbook* *Program Materials* -89 certification program activities as they appeared on the learning platform on 12/4/18 -Unit Plan Template -Lesson Plan Template -TEACH-NOW Clinical Rubric *Internal Documents/Institutional Data* -TEACH-NOW: A Brief Historical Overview -Program Fact Sheet -PowerPoint Overview -TEACH-NOW History -TEACH-NOW Program Descriptions -TEACH-NOW Enrollment Data 2013-2018 -*Quality Assurance Plan* -2019 Alumni Survey *Online Materials* -17 TEACH-NOW webpages as they appeared on 11/28/2018: About Us; Admissions; Blog; Collaboration; FAQ; History & Background; Homepage; Leadership; Master's in Education Degree	120+ documents and online materials

	with Teacher Preparation; Mission & Philosophy; News; Partners; Performance Data; Programs & Degrees; Staff; TEACH-NOW Veterans Initiative; Teacher Preparation Certification Program	
Observations	-One live candidate orientation (i.e., Module 1) -One recorded candidate orientation (i.e., Module 1) -Eight recorded virtual classes from Modules 2-8 (two from Module 8) -One recorded certification program final virtual class -One recorded virtual class from MEd program -Three recorded oral defenses from MEd program	15 observations
Elicited Online Data		
Interviews (30-60 minutes each)	*Leaders/Administrators* -Five administrators who each participated in one interview -One administrator who participated in two interviews -One former administrator who participated in one interview *Instructors* -Four instructors who each participated in one interview -Two instructors who each participated in two interviews *Mentors* -Two virtual mentors (who were also instructors in the program) each participated in one interview -One face-to-face mentor who participated in one interview *Candidates/Graduates:* -Seven candidates who each participated in one interview -Three graduates who each participated in one interview	29 interviews

As Table 1 illustrates, multiple pieces of online data were generated. These included documents, online materials, and observation data that were gathered in consultation with program administrators. In terms of documents, I gathered internal program documents, including teacher preparation program handbooks and manuals. In addition, I collected institutional data and documents, including internal reports and PowerPoints outlining candidate demographics and recruitment/retention rates. Online materials gathered included publicly available extant online data such as the institution's

website and blog posts. Internal, proprietary extant online data were also generated. These included materials sourced from the program's password-protected online learning platform such as assignments and evaluation rubrics.

In addition, extant observation data were generated in the form of both live direct observation and digital video recordings provided by TEACH-NOW. For both observation formats, virtual classes and other key program events were determined in consultation with program leaders, instructors, and candidates. Field notes were recorded during all observations and were guided by a semi-structured protocol consisting of a list of key focus items linked directly to my research questions. See Appendix A for the observation protocol used for virtual class sessions. Throughout each observation, I referred to the appropriate list of key focus items and recorded handwritten notes, including intermittent timestamps. In addition, it is important to note the protocols were not exhaustive inventories, and there were unexpected aspects that emerged during observations that were not reflected in the protocols but were related to the work of this study. I recorded those unexpected aspects in my field notes.

Once an observation was completed, my handwritten field notes were converted into organized, typed "observational notes" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 124). Additionally, as an act of informal, preliminary data analysis, I wrote a separate reflection for each observation in order to record my initial impression of the event (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For those reflections, I considered the presence/absence of the key focus items during the event as well as the occurrence of any surprising aspects of the event that related directly to the aims of my case study or to that of the larger nGSE study.

In terms of elicited interview data, as detailed in Table 1, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 TEACH-NOW participants. All interviews were between 30-60 minutes in length. Interviews were loosely structured based on the interview protocols discussed below. In addition, three research participants were asked to participate in a second, follow-up interview. The primary purpose of follow-up interviews was clarification. Interviews were audio-recorded, and the audio-recordings were professionally transcribed and de-identified. All audio-recording and transcription files were uploaded and stored on Dedoose. Table 2 provides location, background, and school information for the 10 candidate/graduate participants.

Table 2

Candidate and Graduate Participants

Interview Number	Status	Location	Stage in Program	Pre-service/ In-service	Professional Background	School Type
1	Graduate	Asia	Complete	n/a	Teacher	International
2	Graduate	Africa (Asia during program)	Complete	n/a	Worked in non-profit sector	International
6	Graduate	China (South America during program)	Complete	n/a	Teacher	International
7	Candidate	North America	Late	In-service	Teacher/scholar	Charter
16	Candidate	North America	Late	Pre-service	University instructor/ scholar	Charter
17	Candidate	North America	Early	Pre-service	Worked at a daycare	To be determined
18	Candidate	Asia	Middle	In-service	Teacher	International
20	Candidate	Asia	Middle	In-service	Worked in insurance	International
21	Candidate	North America	Late	Pre-service	Years of "odd jobs" then a para-professional	Public
24	Candidate	Asia	Early	In-service	Teacher	International

In keeping with Yin's (2014) emphasis on conducting a case study within its "real-world context," a majority of interviews were conducted using Zoom rather than in face-to-face settings or over the phone. Zoom represented a key characteristic of TEACH-NOW's "real-world context" as an online institution because it was the primary means of synchronous communication used by the program for meetings and classes. Thus, as Gajjala (2009) suggests, my interaction with my interviewees using Zoom helped me "live in the networks that [my] interviewees are living in" (p. 66). In addition, eliciting interview data over Zoom also helped me to interrogate the charge that is sometimes made that online interactions are inferior to face-to-face. According to Orgad (2009), "Normatively, regarding online communication as a constrained version of face-to-face communication implies that online communication is 'less' than face-to-face communication: less authentic, less real, less close, and less truthful" (p. 48). Therefore, interacting with TEACH-NOW participants in one of the online settings in which the work of teacher preparation occurred at the institution represented an effort to examine *in-depth* the real-world context within which the institution operated, thus better honoring participants' local experiences.

My approach to interviews drew mainly from Yin's (2014) recommendations. According to Yin, interviews in qualitative case study research "resemble guided conversations rather than structured inquiries" (p. 110) where the stream of questioning, although following a consistent line of inquiry, "is likely to be fluid rather than rigid" (p. 110). In order to ensure that I remained consistent with the purpose of this dissertation, I created semi-structured interview protocols based on my research questions and informed by my theoretical frameworks as well as the theoretical frameworks guiding the larger

nGSE study. See Appendices B, C, and D for example protocols. To elaborate upon my approach, Table 3 shows how some sample questions from the teacher candidate/graduate interview protocol connected to my research questions.

Table 3

Connecting Research Questions to Interview Questions

Research Questions	Sample Candidate Interview Questions
RQ2: How do teacher candidates experience the process of learning to teach at TEACH-NOW?	-As an online graduate school of education, do you think TEACH-NOW differs from "traditional" teacher preparation programs like those offered at universities? -How do you think TEACH-NOW's online format influences your experience? What does a "typical" synchronous class session look like? What do your interactions with your instructor look like? Your cohort-mates?
RQ2a: What are their backgrounds and reasons for choosing TEACH-NOW?	-Tell me a bit about yourself and how you came TEACH-NOW. What did you do before the program? Are you currently teaching? If so, where? -What interested you in TEACH-NOW? Would you mind sharing a story about your experience in looking into TEACH-NOW? What other opportunities you were considering?
RQ2b: What are candidates'/graduates' perceptions of effective teaching and sense of preparedness?	-Describe the ways in which TEACH-NOW has prepared you for your role as a teacher. -What strategies and practices have you been taught or introduced to in your coursework at TEACH-NOW? What would you say are the most important instructional practices you've learned?

I also took supplementary handwritten notes during each interview, and those notes were converted into organized, typed "observational notes" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 124) that captured my understanding of the participant's responses to the interview questions. And again, just as I did with observations, I also wrote separate short reflections after each interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For those reflections, I

considered themes or patterns in the participant's responses as well as any surprising or unexpected ideas raised during the interview that related directly to the aims of my case study or to that of the larger nGSE study.

Data Analysis

According to Yin (2014), "Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to produce empirically based findings" (p.132).Yin also notes that the "analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed aspects of doing case studies" (p. 133). Given the difficulty of the task (Yin, 2014), I approached the analysis of my case study data systematically. Below I detail my multi-phase analytic strategy and highlight the specific steps I took to organize and interpret the data.

The first phase of my analytic strategy was represented by ongoing preliminary analysis throughout data generation. As noted above, I wrote reflections after each observation and interview as a means of recording my initial impressions about the teacher preparation program at TEACH-NOW and the understandings and assumptions of various TEACH-NOW participants about teacher preparation. While these reflections were informed by the research questions my study addresses related to teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW, they intentionally did not preclude new issues, developments, and insights that were unanticipated. This practice of reflection writing was consistent with Stake's (1995) notion of "interpretation as method" (p. 40), wherein "there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" (p. 71). Thus, as I examined documents and online materials, interviewed participants, and observed program events

in this first phase of data analysis, I took time to pause, ponder, and note what I considered to be emerging themes and possible codes. That ongoing, iterative process allowed me to use the later stages of data generation as a means to further interrogate those themes and patterns.

Although data analysis was ongoing throughout the case study, I engaged in a period of formal data analysis once all data sources were generated. In order to do that, I moved into the second phase of my analytic strategy—organizing and preparing the data (Tracy, 2013; Yin, 2014). According to Tracy (2013), "[T]he organizing process is an interpretive activity. When the data are organized in a certain way, they implicitly encourage the researcher to notice some comparisons and overlook others" (p. 204). In order to avoid "overlooking" important aspects of the data and notice as much as possible, I organized and read the entire data corpus three times and in three ways. First, I read through the data sources and the aforementioned reflections chronologically based on when they were generated. During that first reading, I made note of areas of interest and possible themes and codes related to the purpose of my study. For the seconding reading of the corpus, I read through the sources by data source type, examining documents, interview transcripts and reflections, and observation field notes and reflections in that order. Again, as I read the data for that second time, I made note of possible themes or codes.

For the third read through, I grouped the data sources by the following two broad themes that emerged both during data generation and the first two readings of the corpus: 1) innovation and legitimacy in teacher preparation; 2) candidate online and offline learning experiences. During that third reading, I also conducted an initial round of hand-

coding and highlighted text based on the following six provisional codes derived from the research questions, theoretical frameworks guiding my research, and two previous readings of the data: 1) conceptualization of teacher preparation; 2) enactment of teacher preparation; 3) technology and digital tools; 4) candidate social experiences; 5) candidate learning experiences; 6) teacher educator instructional practices. Drawing on the study's two theoretical frameworks, or as Yin (2014) calls them "theoretical propositions" (p. 136), to develop that list of provisional, deductive codes (Miles et al., 2014) allowed me to create codes that had "conceptual and structural unity" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 82) and attended to my research questions and the larger goals of my work.

As I read the data for the third time and conducted the provisional coding described above, I also engaged in analytic memoing in order capture my thinking as it related to how the data are impacted my understanding of the theoretical frameworks and the phenomenon under investigation writ large. According to Tracy (2013), "Analytic memos help researchers figure out the fundamental stories in the data and serve as a key intermediary step between coding and writing a draft of the analysis (p. 253)." Thus, memoing helped me to think about the interconnectedness of the codes and the themes and patterns that emerged from the data (Tracy, 2013).

Upon completion of my third reading of the data corpus and provisional coding, I drew on Erikson's (1986) approach to qualitative analysis of research on teaching to develop initial arguments or "assertions." According to Erikson (1986):

A report of fieldwork research contains empirical assertions that vary in scope and in level of inference. One basic task of data analysis is to generate these assertions, largely through induction. This is done by searching the data corpus-

reviewing the full set of field notes, interview notes or audiotapes, site documents, and audiovisual recordings. Another basic task is to establish an evidentiary warrant for the assertions one wishes to make. This is done by reviewing the data corpus repeatedly to test the validity of the assertions that were generated, seeking disconfirming evidence as well as confirming evidence. (p. 146)

Based on my ongoing preliminary analysis, systematized readings of the data corpus, and my provisional round of hand-coding, I developed initial assertions and sub-assertions (Erickson, 1986) about the phenomenon of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW. Using Erickson's (1986, p. 148) multi-pronged diagram as a model, I then generated a graphic representation of those initial assertions and sub-assertions and made "key linkages" (p. 147) between them and the data. Erickson (1986) suggests, "A key linkage is key in that it is of central significance for the major assertions the researcher wants to make. The key linkage is linking in that it connects up many items of data as analogous instances of the same phenomenon" (pp. 147-148). Once I had generated initial assertions and linkages, I moved on to the next phase of my analytic process—formal coding of the data using Dedoose.

For the formal coding process, I drew on Miles et al.'s (2014) concept of "pattern coding" (p. 86), which allowed me to group data from the provisional round of coding into "smaller analytic units" (p. 86). According to Miles et al. (2014), pattern codes typically consist of categories or themes, causes/explanations, relationships among people, and theoretical constructs. Based on that notion, the primary codes used during formal coding reflected categorical and thematic patterns that emerged during provisional hand-coding. The sub-codes used during formal coding served to further explain the

content of the primary codes (Miles et al., 2014). Table 4 lists the primary and sub-codes

used during the formal coding process.

Table 4	
List of Codes	
Primary Codes	Sub-Codes

Innovation	• Emphasis on Technology
	    o 21st century skills
	    o Digital tools
	    o Online learning platform
	    o Online/virtual program delivery
	• Program Structure
	    o Candidate cohorts
	    o Sequential modules format
	    o Activity-based assessments
	    o Rubrics
	• Business Model
	    o History
	    o Fast/flexible/affordable
	    o Global
	    o Fills a certification need

Legitimacy	• Accreditation
	    o CAEP
	    o DEAC
	• Use of Standards
	    o InTASC
	    o ITSE
	• Program Content
	    o Effective teaching practices
	    o Learning outcomes
	    o Focus on practice/pedagogy
	• Program Improvement
	    o Feedback
	    o Surveys
	    o Curriculum revision
	• Professional Partnerships
	• Staffing
	• Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Candidate Experiences	• Collaborative Experiences
	    o Group work/assignments
	    o Virtual class sessions
	    o Community-building
	• Individual Experiences
	    o Individual assignments

	○ Content knowledge ○ Field/clinical experiences ○ Background/teaching experience - Instructors ○ Communication ○ Feedback ○ Instructional practices ○ Variation

As I did during my earlier provisional coding, during formal coding, I engaged in analytic memoing using Dedoose's "memo" feature in order to capture my thinking and questions as they related my initial assertions and sub-assertions. Once the codes listed in Table 4 were identified in the data, I examined how the patterns compared and contrasted in order to build what Miles et al. (2014) call "higher-level explanations" (p. 112). Those higher-level explanations enabled me to test my assertions and sub-assertions, make inferences, and draw conclusions from the data (Miles et al., 2014). In doing so, I aimed to demonstrate that there was an "adequate evidentiary warrant" (Erickson, 1986, p. 149) for the finalized arguments of this dissertation.

According to Lather (1986), "Determining that constructs are actually occurring, rather than they are merely inventions of the researcher's perspective, requires a self-critical attitude toward how one's own preconceptions affect the research" (p. 271). Miles et al. (2014) make a similar assertion in simpler terms, "Qualitative analysis can be evocative, illuminating, masterful—and wrong" (p. 293). Combined, the viewpoints of Lather and Miles and colleagues underscore the importance of incorporating safeguards (Miles et al., 2014) into data analysis. Thus, it was important to note that in order to help build confidence in my findings, I used triangulation and participant feedback (Miles et al., 2014).

Specifically, I engaged in data source triangulation (Stake, 1995). According to Stake (1995), "Data source triangulation is an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances" (p. 113). During both early-stage informal data analysis and later-stage formal analysis, I analyzed document/online materials data and interviews data to identify emerging themes and patterns related to my research questions. I then analyzed observation data in order to triangulate and confirm or push against those emerging themes and patterns. Doing so "increase[ed] credence in the interpretation" (Stake, 1995, p. 113). Furthermore, due to the timeline of the larger nGSE study, the documents/online materials and a majority of the interviews came first in the data generation period, and the observations occurred in the later stages of data generation. That sequence also contributed to triangulation in that the observations allowed me to examine the commonality of those themes and patterns further (Stake, 1995).

Finally, to ensure that my findings aligned with the understandings of the institution, in May 2018, I shared my arguments with TEACH-NOW's founder and CEO. Miles et al. (2014) highlight the value in participant feedback explaining, "One of the most logical sources of corroboration is the people you have talked with and watched" (pp. 306-307). In addition, as mentioned above, I requested follow-up interviews from three participants for clarification purposes.

Positionality and Limitations

Four key aspects of my positionality as an educator and researcher had an impact on this case study. First, I am the graduate of a traditional, university-based teacher preparation program. I would describe my teacher preparation experience as "mediocre."

My experience in that program often left me feeling inadequately prepared during the early stages of my career as a high school teacher in a large, urban public school district. During my time as a novice teacher, I often reflected on my initial teacher education experience and wished my program had provided me with more concrete and practical pedagogical tools, tips, and approaches from which to draw upon. Second, I am a millennial, and technology plays a large role in both my personal and professional lives. I believe in the power and potential of digital technologies and online learning to increase access to education, especially as it relates to underserved and underrepresented student populations. However, when this study began, I had had no experience as either a student or an instructor in an online course. Third, in my work as a graduate student scholar, I have pushed back against neoliberal approaches to education reform and supported democratically-minded reform efforts. In particular, I have taken a critical stance against the dominant teacher education accountability paradigm and argued for an approach to teacher education accountability that puts equity and democracy at the forefront (e.g., Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a, 2018b; Cochran-Smith, Stern et al., 2016). Finally, it is critical to acknowledge that the entire research team for the larger nGSE study, as university-based teacher educators and/or scholars, work outside of the institutional domain of our phenomenon of interest. That is, none of us is a participant in an nGSE. Thus, although we are working to understand the nGSE phenomenon from the perspectives of its participants, we ourselves are not participants. In the case of TEACH-NOW and this dissertation, in particular, it is important to emphasize that I recognize that no one understands any approach to teacher preparation in the same way that those who actually take part in it do.

Nonetheless, I remained committed to conducting a qualitative case study that aimed not to judge or evaluate teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW but to understand it from the perspectives of the participants. This is the explicit purpose of the larger study of teacher preparation at nGSEs. To ensure that my study, as well as the other case studies in the nGSE study, were conducted with minimal bias, the research methods presented above, along with those that employed at other case study sites and during cross-case analysis, were explicitly crafted to get at how participants understand the project of learning to teach and how teacher education is enacted. In other words, the methods I have laid out above represented an effort to produce what Miles et al. (2014) call, "a well-grounded sense of local reality" (p. 100).

Finally, Stake (2006) argues that a case study is a study of "particularization" (p. 8) that draws its value from "its attention to the local situation, not how it represents other cases in general" (p. 8). Thus, although this case study is not representative of other cases, my study of TEACH-NOW does offer what Stake calls "a step towards a theory" (p. 8) or what Yin (2014) describes as "analytic generalization" (p. 21). This means my study contributes to theorizing teacher preparation at both nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation programs. In other words, the findings of this study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW contribute to our understanding of the nGSE phenomenon while also helping to shed light on the phenomenon of fully online teacher preparation. Specifically, the study resulted in the development of theoretically- and empirically-grounded knowledge about the goals, practices, and policies of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW and the experiences of its participants. Furthermore, it provided a conceptual analysis of a new model of teacher preparation wherein preparation is removed from the

university setting and relocated within the structures, processes, and ideologies of a fully online, for-profit enterprise. In Chapters Four and Five, I present the findings of my case study and share the theoretically- and empirically-grounded knowledge that emerged from my analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACH-NOW and the Push to Innovate

At the time of this study, TEACH-NOW described its nine-month teacher
certification program in the following manner:

> The goal for our flagship program is to equip, enable, and empower teachers to
> diagnose any learning environment and ensure that every student learns, develops,
> and grows. Candidates who complete the program will be able to design and
> create innovative and effective instruction to enable every student to achieve
> success. They will embrace the changing role of a teacher from a dispenser of
> knowledge to a manager, coach, leader, and facilitator of learning. Candidates
> will be able to select and use next-generation tools and technology for teaching
> and learning to create an active, collaborative learning model for their students
> and effectively manage the learning environment in which formal education
> occurs. (Program Descriptions, p. 2)

The above description encapsulates the aims and assumptions that drove TEACH-NOW's
teacher certification program and makes evident what its founder and CEO referred to as
the institution's effort to represent an innovative, forward-thinking "start-over" (Interview
#27, Founder/CEO) for the field of teacher preparation. With a focus on preparing
candidates for "any learning environment" and "every student" and with specific
attention to "innovative and effective instruction" coupled with the use the of "next-
generation tools and technology," TEACH-NOW aspired to be a "game-changer in the
industry" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). However, this would only be possible if
TEACH-NOW were also regarded as a legitimate teacher preparation provider by leaders

in the field of teacher education and as demonstrated by key traditional indicators of quality.

This means, as I argue in this chapter and the next, that TEACH-NOW operated at the nexus of a complex tension between the push to be innovative and pull to be legitimate. My analysis suggests that TEACH-NOW's ongoing task was to navigate the territory between these two possibly conflicting goals. Generally, this was achieved through strong program coherence that supported innovation and by the very deliberate achievement of accepted markers of credibility in the field of teacher education. As illustrated by Figure 3, the "push and pull" dynamic was at the center of how TEACH-NOW conceptualized and enacted teacher preparation. Specifically, I argue that this dynamic played out in five key areas: 1) its business model; 2) its emphasis on technology; 3) its program structure; 4) its program content; 5) its institutional conduct.
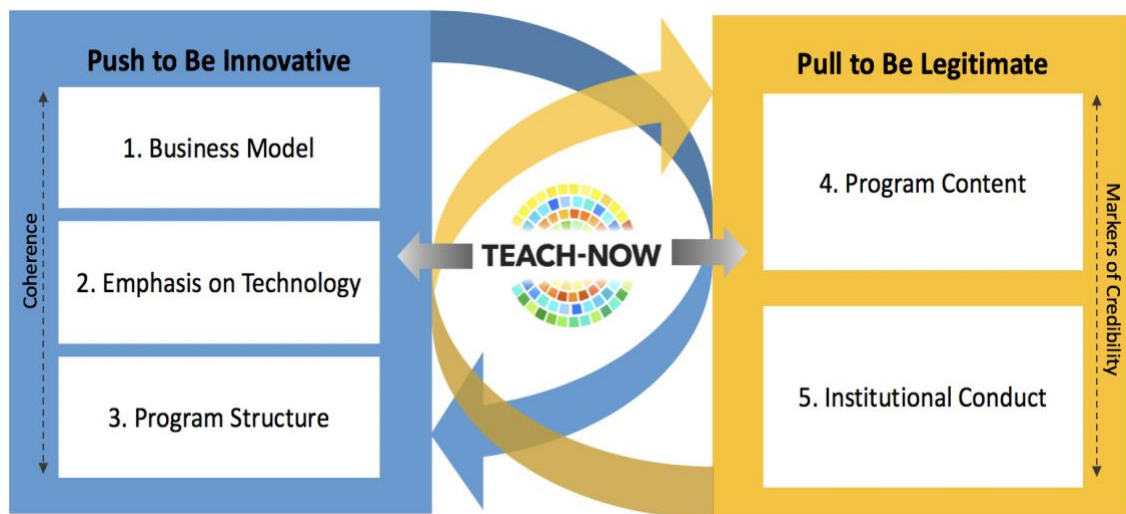
Figure 3. Conceptualization and enactment of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW.

To understand how TEACH-NOW established and maintained a balance between the "push and pull," it is critical to unpack how it addressed the two competing forces that

created the complex tension in the first place and examine how the tension shaped the experience of learning to teach for the program's teacher candidates.

Thus, in this chapter, I take up the first of those forces and present my examination of TEACH-NOW's push to be a major innovator of teacher preparation and show how that push impacted candidates' program experiences. In doing so, I make two central arguments. First, I argue that the institution conceptualized and enacted a highly coherent, mission-driven approach to teacher preparation that supported innovation in three key areas. Second, I argue that TEACH-NOW's push to innovate created a learning environment that required teacher candidates to self-manage their program experiences in accordance with their individual needs, circumstances, and preferences.

To make these arguments, I draw on two conceptions of coherence in teacher preparation programs—Tatto's (1996) idea of "internal coherence" (p. 178) and Hammerness's (2006) definitions of structural and conceptual coherence. In an examination of the ability of teacher education programs to impact candidates' values and beliefs about teaching diverse students, Tatto (1996) suggested that a program's "coherence in terms of shared understandings among faculty and in the manner in which opportunities to learn have been arranged (organizationally, logistically) to achieve a common goal" (p. 176) could be influential on candidate learning. Building on the work of Tatto and other scholars, Hammerness (2006) explored the attempt of one teacher preparation program to become more coherent by looking at elements related to both conceptual and structural coherence. In doing so, Hammerness defined "conceptual coherence" as the consistency of understandings in relation to a program's mission, vision, and/or purpose, on one hand, and "structural coherence," as the creation of an

intentionally integrated, reinforced, and/or sequenced learning experience through the organization of coursework and clinical work, on the other. Using the ideas of Tatto and Hammerness as the basis for my understanding of coherence within a teacher preparation program, I use the term "coherent" to discuss shared understandings around specific elements of TEACH-NOW's conceptualization and enactment of teacher preparation.

Along with the term "coherent," the often contested terms "innovative" and "traditional" are also central to my analysis and interpretation of TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation. My interpretation of "innovative" is informed to a degree by Christensen's seminal theory of "disruptive innovation" (Clayton Christensen Institute, 2019; Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008; Christensen & Raynor, 2003) as well as Garrison's (2017) notions about digital technologies for communication, information, and education. As I use it here, the term "innovative" as applied to teacher preparation programs suggests a process or approach that represents a divergence from convention especially as it relates to the affordability, accessibility, format, and/or content of a teacher preparation experience.

As is apparent, incorporated within my definition of "innovative" is the idea of convention. Diverging from convention implies the existence of an establishment. In teacher preparation, I suggest that the "establishment" is represented by a so-called "traditional" model of initial teacher education. Of course, it is critical to point out that there is neither a uniform nor monolithic model of teacher preparation in the United States, and approaches and programs vary widely. However, despite such deep variation, the label "traditional" remains a commonly used descriptor in the teacher education discourse (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016). Thus, for the purpose of this dissertation,

my understanding of what constitutes a "traditional" teacher preparation program draws on the National Research Council (NRC) (2010) as well as Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2016). According to the NRC (2010), the idea of "traditional" teacher preparation programs "generally refers to those that are housed in colleges and universities and lead to a BA or an MA degree" (p. 35). Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2016) expand upon that general categorization adding, "Although they differ widely in quality, selectiveness, and mission, 'traditional' programs tend to front-load coursework, fieldwork, and other learning opportunities before teachers enter the profession" (p. 452). Therefore, while I acknowledge the existence of vast dissimilarities within the category, I define "traditional" teacher preparation programs as brick-and-mortar college- and university-based programs that grant degrees and offer preprofessional preparation for teaching.

Based on these definitions of the terms coherent, innovative, and traditional, in the sections below, I detail TEACH-NOW's push to innovate teacher preparation and argue that the institution's intent to innovate shaped its understanding of the process of learning to teach and impacted candidates' experiences of that process. To do that, I first focus on how TEACH-NOW's push to innovate influenced the institution's approach to teacher preparation in three key areas: 1) its business model; 2) its emphasis on technology; 3) its program structure. I begin by presenting my analysis of TEACH-NOW's business model and show how the institution's for-profit, tuition-driven strategy responded to demands in the teacher preparation market. Next, I link TEACH-NOW's business model to its deliberate emphasis on technology and pay particular attention to its utilization of e-learning and its assumptions about the nature of education in the 21st century. I then discuss the structure of TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program and

argue that four main elements undergirded how the institution understood the process of learning to teach. In doing so, I draw explicit connections between the enactment of TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation and its technology-centric, market-driven conceptualization in order to show that a strong level of coherence helped to support the innovative aspects of the institution's flagship program. I conclude by demonstrating that the institution's push to be innovative impacted TEACH-NOW's teacher candidates and shaped a self-managed experience of learning to teach.

The TEACH-NOW Business Model

According to Sherry Turkle (2017), a noted sociologist, psychologist, and scholar of human-technology relationships, "People love their new technologies of connection. They have made parents and children feel more secure and have revolutionized business, education, scholarship, and medicine….The global reach of connectivity can make the most isolated outpost into a center of learning and economic activity" (p. 152). My analysis indicates that "technologies of connection" were at the root of the TEACH-NOW business model, which embraced the capacity of digital tools to offer an accessible and affordable educational experience to a global population of teacher candidates. The institution's mission statement reflected that enthusiastic embrace: "TEACH-NOW's mission is to teach teachers around the world to be resourceful problem solvers and tech-savvy educators through an online, collaborative, activity-based learning system designed for tomorrow's students in a dynamic and diverse world" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1).

To fulfill its mission, TEACH-NOW employed what the institution described as a "unique" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 2) business model explicitly intended to diverge

from other teacher preparation pathways. TEACH-NOW's historical overview of its business model captured that intention and highlighted the candid desire to innovate:

> [TEACH-NOW] would be the first organization to provide a scalable, individualized, low cost, efficient, as needed basis option to teacher candidates. Several very costly efforts had been advanced [by others] in the [teacher preparation] market with varying degrees of success. TEACH-NOW's approach was unique. It could be standards-based and research-based and be low cost and highly efficient. (Brief Historical Overview, p. 2)

As the above description reflects, TEACH-NOW's business model operated based on the correct assumption that there was a market for "individualized," "low cost," and "highly efficient" teacher preparation.

The Motivation: "A Solution to the Problem"

In Chapter One, I outlined the alleged failure of U.S. college- and university-based teacher preparation programs to adequately ready their teacher candidates for the needs of today's student population and the demands of today's labor market (Cochran-Smith, Carney, et al., 2018a). In doing so, I noted that a number of innovative approaches to teacher preparation have emerged partly in response to that narrative (Liu, 2013; Schneider, 2018; Zeichner, 2014, 2016). Included among those approaches are both nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation programs, each of which represents a disruptive break from the "traditional" model of teacher preparation as I defined it above (Liu, 2013; Schorr, 2013). As a fully online nGSE, TEACH-NOW was uniquely positioned at the intersection of the phenomenon of nGSEs (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016)

and the phenomenon of fully online teacher preparation (Liu, 2013) and reflected many of the larger purposes undergirding the emergence of each phenomenon.

From the start, then, TEACH-NOW was intended to be a solution. Specifically, I found that it was created in order to be a forward-thinking innovator in teacher preparation and serve as the "solution to the problem of how do we prepare tomorrow's teachers, or tomorrow's students, for tomorrow's learning world?" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). According to its founder and CEO, who was a well-known education researcher with a background in alternate routes and named one of *Fast Company's* "100 Most Creative People in Business, 2019" (Meyer, 2019), TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program emerged from years of questioning the quality and delivery method of other approaches to teacher preparation:

> And all my life, all my career, the focus was always on how can we fix this? How can we fix this? What do we need to do to improve the way we prepare teachers? What do we need to do to make certification more sensible and reasonable? I thought a lot about that, and then I just said, "Somebody really does need to go back to the drawing board and work [on] the approach of fixing this." (Interview #27, Founder/CEO)

Another administrator highlighted the specific objectives that informed the conceptualization of TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation and noted that "the objective of this was always to design it so teachers that go through the program learn in the way we hope they will teach in the classroom" (Interview #13, Administrator) and that those teachers would be able to use technology effectively in their practice (Interview #13, Administrator). Related to that focus on technology, according to the

founder and CEO, TEACH-NOW was also always envisioned to be an online, digitally-rich preparation program:

> The decision was made that it had to be online, it had to be technology-savvy. What we did that sets it apart from what anybody else is doing, is that we did go back to the drawing board and create it from scratch. (Interview #27, Founder/CEO)

The assertion that teacher preparation needed to be recreated "from scratch" points to a number of provocative underlying assumptions at TEACH-NOW about the state, purpose, and nature of the teacher preparation enterprise. First, my analysis suggests that, similar to other nGSEs and the aforementioned popular failure narrative, TEACH-NOW's founding reflected an assumption that so-called "traditional" models of teacher preparation inadequately address the needs of today's teacher candidates and their future P-12 students, and thus, the teacher preparation enterprise needed to be fixed. In addition, the motivations behind TEACH-NOW's founding was that the "fix" for the teacher preparation enterprise had to involve technology. As a result, and in alignment with the growing phenomenon of fully online teacher preparation, TEACH-NOW was based on the assumption that candidates could be prepared for the face-to-face work of P-12 teaching in an online setting and that technology would play a central role in that preparation. A comment made by a TEACH-NOW administrator in a 2015 interview with *The Hechinger Report* illustrated these assumptions: "The majority of [schools of education] are pretty stale and boring and don't really prepare teachers to work in 21st century schools" (Quoted in Mader, 2015, brackets in original).

Based on the shared understanding that most schools of education were "stale and boring" and that they failed to prepare teachers for "21st century schools," TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program quickly moved from the "drawing board" to a profitable reality. In late 2011, with seed money from the NewSchools Venture Fund, the founder of TEACH-NOW established a certification-only program at the National Center for Education Information (NCEI) in Washington, D.C. Just seven months later, NCEI closed and its certification-only program became a stand-alone corporation known as TEACH-NOW, Inc. In March 2013, TEACH-NOW enrolled its first cohort of 10 teacher candidates having received approval as a teacher preparation program from the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education. In November of that same year, the institution received additional teacher preparation program approval from the Arizona State Department of Education (TN History).

TEACH-NOW became an nGSE when it was granted a license to operate as an institution of higher education by the D.C. Higher Education Licensure Commission in July 2015 and began doing business as the Educatore School of Education. In 2017, the institution received accreditation from both the Distance Education Accreditation Commission (DEAC), a national institutional accreditor for distance education, and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), a national programmatic accreditor of teacher preparation programs. The institution changed its name to TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education in early 2018 (TN History).

By late 2018, the institution had enrolled over 3,000 in-service and prospective teachers with a 95% student completion rate (TN History). It is important to note that the vast majority of TEACH-NOW enrollees elected to complete the certification-only

pathway with only 336 pursuing MEds (Founder/CEO, personal communication, December 12, 2018). It is also important to acknowledge that approximately two-thirds of candidates in the teacher preparation program were in-service teachers seeking initial teacher certification while working in their own classrooms (*Quality Assurance Plan*), many of them in countries other than the United States. Despite the high number of in-service teachers enrolled, the teacher preparation program at TEACH-NOW did not operate as an "internship" model of teacher preparation. The internship model is an approach where teacher candidates are *intentionally* designated as teacher of record at the start of a program and take courses in conjunction with their classroom teaching responsibilities. Even though we have found in our larger study that internship models are employed by some nGSEs, this was not the model at TEACH-NOW. Rather, TEACH-NOW's focus was on pre-professional preparation, and whether teacher candidates were or were not already employed in classrooms, all candidates completed the same coursework and were held to uniform expectations about what teacher candidates needed to know and be able to do in order to teach well.

At the time of data generation, TEACH-NOW had three program offerings: 1) its flagship nine-month teacher certification program; 2) a 12-month MEd with teacher preparation program, which was a three-month extension of the certification program that included additional coursework in five focus area options (i.e., early childhood education, special education, teaching multilingual learners, globalization in education, and educational research); 3) a 12-month non-certification MEd program with an emphasis on globalization and educational research which was intended for teachers who already had a teaching certificate and included much of the same coursework as the other two

programs but did not have a clinical component (Program Descriptions; *Quality Assurance Plan*). Given that a majority of TEACH-NOW's candidates chose to enroll in the nine-month teacher certification program, that program was the focus of this dissertation.

According to Christensen et al. (2008), "Motivation is the catalyzing ingredient for every successful innovation" (p. 7). My analysis indicates that this was true for TEACH-NOW with its success is defined as steadily increasing enrollment figures, a high completion rate, and as I discuss later, profitability. Thus, TEACH-NOW's rapid growth and success suggest that the institution fulfilled the goals laid out when it was first imagined by its forward-thinking founder and CEO and had "become a solution" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). According to the founder and CEO, "The original dream, and it was a dream, has come true" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). In the next section, I suggest that capitalizing on a specific market need helped that "dream" come to fruition.

The Business: "Identifying a Market Need"

As described in Chapter One, more and more individuals are electing to earn degrees online (NCES, 2016) with prospective teachers representing a growing segment of that group (Liu, 2013). The increasing popularity of fully online teacher preparation comes at a complex time for the teaching profession wherein high-cost college- and university-based programs are shouldering the blame for not producing effective teachers and many P-12 school districts are encountering severe teacher shortages in certain areas and attrition levels (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Combined, these difficulties create an opportunity for teacher preparation start-ups (Lincove et al., 2015), which include not only nGSEs but also fully online *for-profit* teacher preparation

programs such as those offered by the University of Phoenix and iTeach (Lincove et al., 2015). The growing popularity of for-profit online entities reflects not only perceived shortcomings about face-to-face preparation programs but also a strategic leveraging of a specific market opportunity stemming from a demand for teachers. According to Fox Garrity (2013), "For-profit institutions are noted for catering to non-traditional students and for providing programs with high student demand to maximize enrollments. When these two forces converged, an environment ripe for the expansion of for-profit provision of teacher education was created" (p. 523). TEACH-NOW emerged from that ripe environment.

As detailed above, the founding of TEACH-NOW was driven in part by assumptions about the inadequacies of "traditional" college- and university-based programs. While TEACH-NOW worked to address those perceived inadequacies, I argue that its founding also represented an innovative response to opportunities in the teacher preparation market. A document detailing the institution's history illustrates this. In that document, the phrase "Identifying a Market Need" serves as a heading for a paragraph about the development of the company, and in that paragraph, the founder of the institution is described as having "perciev[ed] a critical need around the globe for high quality individuals to teach tomorrow's learners" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 1). In other words, TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program was founded, in part, to fill a perceived void in the global teacher preparation marketplace.

Furthermore, there was a shared understanding across the institution about that market-based logic. For example, one administrator I interviewed connected TEACH-NOW to specific consumer demands:

The reason our CEO is so forward-thinking is that [the CEO] noticed that even between the states that there wasn't a clear path to licensure and it's different at each state. [The CEO] saw that there was a need in the United States and then there's a teacher shortage all over the world. [The CEO] wanted to create a streamlined program that could assess the needs of the United States and the world. (Interview #15, Administrator)

A TEACH-NOW instructor elaborated upon that viewpoint and also highlighted TEACH-NOW's appeal to non-traditional students:

I think TEACH-NOW is a market example of an opportunity, you know? It's obviously a business…So I think that it's sort of a free market example of when somebody with an idea gets involved and has an opportunity to offer something that's not being offered often times to clientele that are non-traditional, right? If you think about the clientele of a traditional university or school of ed., it's certainly not our candidates. They go to fill a need and [be] offer[ed] a premier service. (Interview # 10, Instructor)

The instructor's use of the terms "clientele" and "premier service" helps to underscore that TEACH-NOW was not only a graduate school of education but also a for-profit business.

In a 2016 piece in *The Washington Post* about TEACH-NOW, its founder and CEO explained the reasoning for making the institution a for-profit venture: "'I've always chosen 'private, for-profit' because I believe in letting the consumer decide the value'" (as quoted in Heath, 2016, para. 12). That focus on the power of consumer opinion and choice thus resulted in the deliberate incorporation of TEACH-NOW as a

tuition-driven, for-profit company as opposed to a public and/or privately-supported non-profit organization, which is the funding model employed by the other nGSEs we have identified in the larger study. Although TEACH-NOW received initial seed-money from NewSchools Venture Fund, at the time of this case study, it was funded fully through revenue from student tuition. As one administrator put it, "We're a for-profit company, and our funding is entirely through candidate enrollments, so entirely through the tuition that we charge...We don't have any debt" (Interview #25, Administrator). The founder and CEO expanded upon this and touched upon the notable cost-saving benefits of their business model: "We're 100% tuition-based. When you're not building buildings and planting ivy to grow up, you don't need that money...Having it all online and virtual is a tremendous cost-saving" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO).

That cost-savings resulted in what that same administrator called "an extraordinary profit" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). This aligns with a *Forbes* article, which stated that in 2016 alone, TEACH-NOW made $4 million in revenue and had a 25-percent profit-margin (Stengal, 2017). In order to get a better sense of how TEACH-NOW earned such profits, it is essential to understand its "product." Thus, in the next section, I explore the appeal of TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program to its "consumers"—prospective and in-service teachers.

The Program: "Fast, Flexible, and Affordable"

In a 2016 interview with *PBS Newshour*, the founder and CEO of TEACH-NOW connected TEACH-NOW's fulfillment of a market need to the desirability of its teacher preparation program:

So there's really been a groundswell of interest in teaching on a part of mid-career

switchers, people who've raised a family and decided to do a career later in life,

people who want to move in and out of careers. So, that market, I saw coming.

When you run the kind of program we're running, which is not only so good, but

it can be taken anywhere, any time, it's very desirable. (as quoted in Brangham,

2016, pp. 3-4)

The idea that TEACH-NOW, as a fully online nGSE, offers preparation that could be

"taken anywhere, any time" appealed particularly to those seeking both efficiency and

cost-effectiveness in their certification experiences. This was further highlighted by an

internal document that posed the question "What is TEACH-NOW?" and in response

described the company as "an online teacher preparation program that allows candidates

from around the world to obtain a teaching license and/or a Master's Degree through a

fast, flexible, and affordable option" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1). The notion that the

program was "fast, flexible, and affordable" was central to the success of its business

model.

As its name implies, TEACH-NOW reflected a sense of urgency and efficiency.

While candidates could not literally obtain teaching certification "now," they could do so

in just nine months. Thus, the teacher certification program at TEACH-NOW represented

a fast and streamlined *preprofessional* preparation experience in comparison to more

"traditional" two- and four-year programs offered at colleges and universities. An

instructor I interviewed connected the program's streamlined nature to its market-based

strategy contrasting it with the length of many "traditional" preparation programs and

comparing it to corporate training:

I think, for example, when you go to a four-year degree school, a four-year

school, and you want to be a teacher, you have to go through four years. This is

nine months. I think there's a parallel mindset to corporate training, and

certification, and badging programs, and schools that are grabbing onto those...

And I think the line between higher ed. and corporate training is blurring.

(Interview #4, Instructor)

To maximize its efficiency and offer fast certification to a broad population of

candidates that included both prospective and uncertified in-service teachers, TEACH-

NOW enrolled new candidates monthly (except in December) and did not have the

breaks, vacations, or holidays found in many college- and university-based preparation

programs. As the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook* described, "Because candidates enter

programs of TEACH-NOW every month except December, a traditional academic

calendar with limited enrollment periods and holidays is not applicable" (p. 13). Thus,

TEACH-NOW did not follow a typical semester model or offer the common course

structure found at colleges and universities. Instead, teacher candidates progressed

through a series of online modules taken in sequence, which I describe in more detail

later in this chapter.

In addition to its streamlined format, TEACH-NOW also offered a level of

flexibility not typically found in college- and university-based teacher preparation

programs. As one instructor posited, "I think the convenience of it is what is enticing"

(Interview #5, Instructor). The enticement of convenience that TEACH-NOW offered

aligns with research on fully online teacher preparation, which suggests that online

teacher candidates expect fully online programs to provide flexible and supportive

learning experiences (e.g., Banegas & Manzur Busleiman, 2014; Cain & Phillip, 2013; Moss & Pittaway, 2013). TEACH-NOW was deliberately designed to appeal to these. For example, the institution marketed the streamlined nature of the program on its website and suggested that its approach allowed candidates "to continue doing what [they're] doing while acquiring [their] certification to teach" (TEACH-NOW, 2018a, para. 4).

The idea that candidates could continue to do what they were already doing (whether that was teaching or another job) while obtaining teaching certification connects to Turkle's (2015, 2017) ideas related to modern society's propensity to multitask. Turkle posits that technology fosters "a new notion of time" (p. 164) wherein individuals are able to layer activities and responsibilities upon one another and thus complete several tasks simultaneously. In promoting its flexibility, TEACH-NOW embodied that notion and supported the view that in today's digital culture, we can—and are even expected to—balance multiple tasks and obligations by maximizing our new understanding of time. The language TEACH-NOW used to describe the program to its enrolled candidates further reflected that notion. For example, the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook* emphasized that enrolled candidates "have access to the learning platform with activities, learning resources, instructor feedback, and their transcript at *any time of the day or night, without regard to holidays and other significant dates*" (p. 13, emphasis added).

By embracing and promoting the flexibility made possible via the use of digital technologies, TEACH-NOW was also able to endorse the idea of *accessibility* as a central tenet of the institution's push to innovate teacher preparation. According to its mission,

TEACH-NOW aimed to "teach teachers around the world." To do that, its programming

had to be accessible and easily available to a global candidate population. Both Turkle's

(2017) and Garrison's (2017) ideas about connectivity are helpful here. As noted earlier,

Turkle (2017) suggests that connectivity enables individuals in isolated locales to engage

in learning and economic activities. Similarly, Garrison (2017) argues, "Educators are

moving beyond the myth and hype of technology and are offering worthwhile and

meaningful learning experiences unconstrained by time and distance" (p. 171). By

leveraging connectivity to serve candidates in global locales, TEACH-NOW offered what

it deemed a quality certification program "unconstrained by time and distance."

Freed from the constraints of time and distance and by seizing upon new societal

norms relating to multitasking and time management, TEACH-NOW represented a

distinct departure from more rigid, face-to-face preparation options. The founder and

CEO highlighted that departure and pointed to perceived problems with "traditional"

methods of program delivery:

> [T]he problem with teacher education in general, with its traditional delivery, is
> it's still traditional delivery...And a lot of programs are not flexible. Because the
> one thing they're brick-and-mortar. You really can only serve the people who can
> get to your school. That's very limiting. (Interview #27, Founder/CEO)

Reflecting a shared understanding of the value of flexibility and accessibility in teacher

preparation, a TEACH-NOW instructor expanded upon the benefits of TEACH-NOW's

online format: "If you're in a brick-and-mortar higher level education setting, sometimes

being able to go into the office at 9 o'clock at night is not available, whereas you can

online" (Interview #9, Instructor). As a fully online program, TEACH-NOW was not limited by physical proximity, in particular. As one administer explained:

> We can reach easily, and people can reach us easily, and faster, and on time, way better than any brick-and-mortar schools. We cut out the whole time travel, so even if there was a brick-and-mortar school in your city, for example, you still have to take the time out to go to the school, probably even leave your job, or whatever you're doing in order to go to that school. (Interview #13, Administrator)

By cutting out travel time and offering a fast and flexible format, TEACH-NOW was also able to attract what they described as an "ethnically and geographically diverse population" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1) from over 110 countries around the world (TN History). That diversity was reflected in candidate demographics. According to information listed on the TEACH-NOW website at the time of data generation, its candidates identified as the following: 60% as being located in the United States; 60% as female; 61% as white; 12.2% as black; 14.7% as Asian; 7.4% as Latino; 0.2% as American Indian; 5% as "other" (TEACH-NOW, 2018e). In addition, my observations of two different candidate orientation sessions verified the ethnic and geographic diversity of the TEACH-NOW candidate population. In one session, the 14 candidates were all located outside the United States, and those candidates identified as a mix of Americans and other nationalities from Europe, Africa, and Asia (Observation #1, Orientation). In the other orientation session I observed, the 11 candidates represented a combination of nationalities and geographic locations ranging from an American located in a large U.S. city to a European living in Asia to a person both from and located in a nation in Africa

(Observation #2, Orientation). It is also interesting to note that TEACH-NOW's internationality was unintentional. According to the founder and CEO, "[The] international market came to us. I didn't go to it" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO).

What made TEACH-NOW attractive to such a diverse population of teacher candidates was not only its fast and flexible nature but also its price point. Put simply, my analysis suggests that a key factor in TEACH-NOW's ability to attract an international customer base was its affordability. In addition, I found that TEACH-NOW's approach to tuition-pricing further highlighted the program's aim to innovate. The 2018-2019 tuition for the certification program was $6000, and the tuition for certification plus MEd programs was $13,000 (TEACH-NOW, 2018c), both of which were far less expensive than tuition costs at "traditional" college- and university-based programs. TEACH-NOW's flat-rate tuition included all required learning materials and resources meaning candidates did not have to buy textbooks or any additional supplies. Although TEACH-NOW did not offer loans and financial aid and did not participate in the federal Title IV aid program (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*), it did offer an incremental payment plan (TEACH-NOW, 2018c).

According to the founder and CEO, TEACH-NOW's low-cost approach was a deliberate decision on the part of the institution: "We made the tuition affordable, and it is affordable. And we give people an interest-free payment plan. Do we lose candidates because we don't have student funding financial aid? Probably. Are we going to change that? No." (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). TEACH-NOW instructors exhibited a shared understanding of the impact of the program's cost when discussing why candidates selected TEACH-NOW. For example, one instructor connected the cost to the program's

length: "Even in a world of online master's and things like that you couldn't find a place where you could walk out in a set amount of time with a set price tag and be done" (Interview #10, Instructor).

It is important to note that the affordability of TEACH-NOW's programming is consistent with funding models seen across the nGSE phenomenon. As part of the larger nGSE study, our research team is examining nGSE tuition and program cost, and our preliminary analysis indicates that all nGSEs under investigation employ tuition models centered on being low- or even no-cost to teacher candidates. Yet, TEACH-NOW was as not only an affordable but also a *fast and flexible* teacher preparation program. I argue that this innovative business model set it apart from the other nGSEs. As detailed above, the motivations and assumptions driving that business model were consistently understood across TEACH-NOW administrators and instructors, and included coherent views about TEACH-NOW's aims and purposes, similar perceptions about the shortcomings of "traditional" programs, and a shared desire to meet the specific needs of today's teacher preparation consumers.

The TEACH-NOW Emphasis on Technology

As detailed above, TEACH-NOW's business model was one of three key areas that contributed to the institution's push to be innovative. The second of those areas was TEACH-NOW's consistent emphasis on technology. Specifically, the institution's coherent framing of technology as central to the successful preparation and practice of its candidates indicated its intent to be a major innovator of teacher preparation. This was illustrated in the institution's *Curriculum Development Manual* which stated, "Technology is at the heart of [TEACH-NOW's] programs, as teacher candidates learn to

think critically about—and put into practice—technology as a key addition to their instructional toolbox" (p. 4). In particular, I found that TEACH-NOW's emphasis on technology manifested in two main ways: 1) reliance on e-learning technologies for program delivery and 2) consistent focus on 21st century skills. What I found was that TEACH-NOW's innovative prioritization and promotion of e-learning and 21st century skills were directly linked to the shared motivations and assumptions underlying its business model. In other words, TEACH-NOW's emphasis on technology reflected a shared desire to meet specific technology-related needs of teacher candidates in the digital age.

The Delivery: "The Learning Experience is Primarily Virtual"

The same internal document that detailed how TEACH-NOW responded to a particular market need also described how the program emerged as a response to an institutional awareness that "rapid technological developments were having a dramatic effect on how people acquire knowledge and how they communicate." (Brief Historical Overview, p. 1). That awareness led to the development of what TEACH-NOW deemed to be "a technologically sophisticated, online program that any teaching candidate, anywhere in the world...could participate [in]" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 1). TEACH-NOW's perception that technology could enable, as its mission stated, the development of "resourceful problem solvers and tech-savvy educators" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1) aligns with Garrison's (2017) argument about the perceived "transformational" potential of e-learning. Garrison (2017) posits:

> The emergence of e-learning with its sustained connectivity has demonstrated that
>
> deep and meaningful learning is not limited to the face-to-face classroom

experience. E-learning is transformational in how we think about educational

experiences in terms of sustained communication and collaboration. (p. 1)

The TEACH-NOW learning experience was described in different institutional

documents as both "primarily virtual" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 4) and

"completely virtual" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 2). Although slightly different in

meaning, both descriptions reflect the importance TEACH-NOW placed on the aspects of

its teacher preparation program that occurred exclusively in digital spaces. Furthermore

and as I discuss later in this chapter, TEACH-NOW's virtual learning experience was

also intended to be highly collaborative and thus subscribed to the forward-thinking

notion that "deep and meaningful learning" was possible in those digital spaces.

TEACH-NOW's assumption that meaningful learning is possible in digital spaces

was reflected in its reliance on a "custom-built learning platform" (*Catalog and

Candidate Handbook*, p. 15) to deliver all assignments and learning resources as well as a

central feature of its program—weekly synchronous virtual class sessions. By depending

on an online learning platform to host the entirety of its programming, TEACH-NOW

both exercised and promoted the idea that digital tools are essential to not only teaching

but also to learning to teach. This is illustrated in an internal document that positioned

communication and education technologies as central to the genesis of the institution:

The content and delivery of the program would be put on a highly interactive

technology platform that would enable candidates to not only read but see and

hear instructional content as well as view videos of content in action by effective

teachers, interact with each other and with instructors about the content, and

develop their own teaching experiences demonstrating their knowledge and skills.

(Brief Historical Overview, pp. 2-3)

In utilizing an interactive online learning platform for program delivery, TEACH-NOW not only assumed, as Garrison (2017) suggests, that substantive learning is possible in digital spaces but also made the case that teachers can be effectively prepared within those spaces. This was further illustrated by the founder and CEO who stated, "TEACH-NOW wouldn't exist without its reliance on technology. I mean, the fundamental criter[ion] for creating TEACH-NOW was that it had to be technology-based" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). That criterion was directly connected to TEACH-NOW's goal of preparing "candidates who have a passion for teaching tomorrow's students in tomorrow's learning world" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1) and reflected a central assumption that undergirded the conceptualization of teacher preparation at the institution— technology is key to teaching and learning.

My analysis indicates that TEACH-NOW's reliance on a cloud-based learning platform and synchronous virtual class sessions aligns with Garrison's (2017) perception about the role of teaching and learning in the digital age. Garrison (2017) posits, "In the context of a rapidly changing knowledge society, the need is to evolve the learning experience in a way that models and prepares students for an increasingly connected knowledge society" (p. 2). This idea was illustrated by TEACH-NOW's position that the use of technology extends beyond the classroom and is essential to an individual's overall success in the digital age. One of the activities in the certification program prompted candidates to consider the following: "As an educator in the 21st [c]entury, it is important for you to answer the question, 'What year are you preparing your students for?'"

(Module 3, Unit 2, Activity 1, para. 1). In the next section, I discuss how TEACH-NOW answered that question.

The Aim: "Proficient 21st Century Teachers"

In Chapter One, I detailed how multiple entities have propagated a teacher preparation failure narrative in the United States and pushed for reform initiatives intended to produce a workforce of teachers who understand the role teachers and teacher educators play in the nation's economic well-being and overall global competitiveness (Cochran-Smith, Carney, et al., 2018a). In particular, I pointed to 2009 remarks made by then U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in which he claimed that "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" (para. 3). As a program focused explicitly on preparing "proficient 21st century teachers" (*Quality Assurance Plan*, p. 5), the teacher certification program at TEACH-NOW aimed to achieve Duncan's call for "revolutionary change."

As detailed earlier, TEACH-NOW was founded to be an innovative "solution" that, according to its mission statement, prepared teachers "for tomorrow's students in a dynamic and diverse world" (Program Fact Sheet, p.1). My analysis suggests that a central part of TEACH-NOW's perceived "solution" was the program's coherent emphasis on 21st century skills. In defining "21st century skills," TEACH-NOW drew upon the standards of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) (2016) and the framework of the Partnership for 21st Century Knowledge and Skills (Battelle for Kids, n.d.). In doing so, TEACH-NOW understood "21st century skills" as those that enable and empower students and teachers alike to problem-solve, collaborate,

and think critically while also using digital tools and technology effectively in order to thrive in a networked, global society (Module 3, Unit 1, Activity 2; Module 3, Unit 3, Activity 1).

As noted, one of the activities in TEACH-NOW's certification program prompted candidates to consider the year for which they were preparing their students (Module 3, Unit 2, Activity 1). The instructions for that activity went on to emphasize that it was candidates' "responsibility as [educators] to prepare [their] students for a newer, digitally advanced, world where many of today's jobs won't exist by the time the students enter the world of work" (Module 3, Unit 2, Activity 1, para. 1). As a result of that "responsibility," my analysis suggests that TEACH-NOW understood 21st century teachers to be collaborative, tech-savvy practitioners who exhibit "digital awareness and use" (*Mentor Handbook*, p. 5) and critically examine the role of technology in their teaching practice (PowerPoint Overview). To do that, TEACH-NOW required candidates to "use and become familiar with technology that is essential in the modern classroom with students who are increasingly digital natives" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 4). Not only did the TEACH-NOW curriculum include a four-week module titled "The Learner and Learning in a Digital Age" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 12), which required candidates to study the ISTE "standards for preparing students for the digital age" (Module 3, Unit 1, Activity 2, para. 3), but as I discuss further in Chapter Five, 21st century skills were also emphasized throughout the entire curriculum of the certification program.

TEACH-NOW exhibited a high level of coherence around its emphasis on the importance of technology and its belief in the significance of preparing teachers in an

efficient, accessible, and cost-effective manner. Driven by its mission, TEACH-NOW envisioned itself as a forward-thinking "start-over" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO) for the field of teacher preparation centered on the development of "resourceful problem solvers and tech-savvy educators" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1). Embedded in the coherence surrounding TEACH-NOW's conceptualization of its teacher certification program was a belief in the power of technology to make possible an innovative, "game-changing" approach to teacher preparation. TEACH-NOW emerged at a pivotal time in education wherein "the information age and a networked world have forced educators to rethink educational approaches" (Garrison, 2017, p. 21). The institution seized that opportunity and created a program that "had to be technology-based" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). In doing so, I posit that TEACH-NOW also embodied a notion of teaching and learning that maximized the possibilities of technology and fully embraced a world where constant connectivity and multitasking are seen as positive advances.

The Structure of the TEACH-NOW Teacher Certification Program

A major finding of this study is that TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program was not only coherent and innovative in printed or spoken statements about the program's vision and aspirations but also in how the program was enacted. Thus, I suggest the third key area in which the institution pushed to innovate teacher preparation was through its program structure. As TEACH-NOW's mission indicated, the structure of its teacher certification program was based on the assumption that its "online, collaborative, activity-based learning system" was the most effective means by which to prepare "proficient 21st century teachers." By relying on its online learning system to prepare teachers, TEACH-NOW posited that such a system could function as not only a

vehicle for content delivery but also as a conduit for candidates' integration into what Garrison (2017) has described as a "dynamic and intellectually challenging learning community" (p 4). TEACH-NOW's effort to develop community amongst its teacher candidates was largely dependent on shared understandings about the following main elements of the program's structure: 1) sequential online modules; 2) synchronous virtual class sessions; 3) collaborative candidate cohorts; 4) an activity-based assessment strategy. I argue that these four elements created a coherent structure and organization for candidate learning experiences and worked in service of TEACH-NOW's stated aim to be "a fast, flexible, and affordable option" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1).

Sequential Online Modules

As mentioned earlier, TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program did not follow the traditional semester model used by most other institutions of higher education. Instead, TEACH-NOW candidates progressed through what the institution described as "a series of intense, comprehensive modules of different lengths, taken in sequence" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1) and accessed via its proprietary online learning platform. The following eight modules comprised the teacher certification program at the time data were generated for this dissertation:

1. Program Orientation (1 week)

2. The Culture of Schooling (3 weeks)

3. The Learner and Learning in a Digital Age (4 weeks)

4. Managing the Learning Environment (6 weeks)

5. Student Assessments (4 weeks)

6. Planning and Preparation for Learning (4 weeks)

7. Introduction to Clinical Practice (2 weeks)

8. Teacher Practice and Proficiency (12 weeks)

Each module was made up of several units, and each unit was one week in length. In addition, each module translated to a specific number of credit hours. For example, the fourth module, "Managing the Learning Environment," was comprised of six one-week-long units and successful completion earned a candidate three credits (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*).

Furthermore, it is important to note that candidates could not move forward from one module to the next until they completed all module activities and "achiev[ed] an overall proficiency score of 2.6 on a 4-point scale in the module" (*Quality Assurance Plan*, p. 30).

TEACH-NOW's innovative use of sequential online modules rather than traditional semester-based courses was a direct reflection of both its business model and its emphasis on technology. Specifically, given its online nature, the module-based structure of the program was intended to offer candidates convenience and accessibility and to enable them to engage with it at times that worked for them. TEACH-NOW operated based on DEAC's definition of academic credit hours for online learning experiences, which requires 30 hours of preparation *outside* of class per credit hour (e.g., reading websites and resources, viewing videos, reviewing peer work, participating in discussion forums) (*Curriculum Development Manual*). In doing so, TEACH-NOW emphasized the importance of learning during non-class time and gave candidates the flexibility to independently review a module's materials at times that worked for them,

thus reserving synchronous virtual class time for clarification, discussion, and sharing (*Quality Assurance Plan*).

Underlying this approach is an assumption that teacher preparation programs should adapt to the needs, preferences, and schedules of 21st century teacher candidates. Rather than expecting candidates to conform to the format, physicality, and calendars of "traditional" brick-and-mortar programs, TEACH-NOW reversed that mindset and catered to its candidates. As the founder and CEO explained, "[The candidates] are the focal point of this program. And they know it…And every instructor and every mentor, and every staff person knows that that's the case. And we all live that and the candidate comes first. Every single time" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). An internal document further illustrated the institution's decision to put individual candidates first: "TEACH-NOW's online, technology-driven, cloud based platform would provide learning experiences and interactions that suited the needs of individual teacher learners" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 2).

By breaking with the traditional semester model and working to suit "the needs of individual teacher learners," TEACH-NOW reflected confidence in the functions and capacities of e-learning technology. This aligns with Garrison's (2017) assertion that "e-learning's ability to facilitate an enhanced, yet more convenient and in many cases less expensive, educational approach, is not hyperbole" (p. 142). Garrison (2017) argues that appreciating and maximizing the functions and abilities of e-learning is central to the continued viability of colleges and universities. Thus, by leveraging the capacity of e-learning via the use of sequential online modules, TEACH-NOW's teacher certification

program represented an attempt to offer the type of forward-thinking educational approach Garrison promotes.

Synchronous Virtual Class Sessions

The second key element to the structure of the teacher certification program at TEACH-NOW was its use of synchronous virtual class sessions (or as the institution called them "VCs"). In examining the purpose of TEACH-NOW's utilization of virtual classes, it is helpful to consider the "social presence" of Garrison's (2017) "Community of Inquiry" (CoI) framework that I introduced in Chapter Two. According to the framework, the social presence of an e-learning experience refers to its relational and emotional aspects and includes student interaction, communication, and trust-building in digital spaces. Garrison (2017) argues that in an e-learning experience, the social presence "sets the academic climate" (p. 38) and fosters communication and cohesion amongst participants. According to Garrison (2017):

> Social presence is concerned with connecting people through both personal and
> academic communication (open communication) that will build group cohesion
> and a commitment to purposeful inquiry" (p. 38)

To foster group cohesion, Garrison (2017) suggests that instructors teaching in digital learning environments should encourage student introductions and chat, incorporate collaborative assignments, and create opportunities for discourse and critical inquiry.

TEACH-NOW's utilization of weekly virtual classes demonstrated the institution's belief in both the effectiveness of e-learning and the importance of creating what Garrison (2017) calls "a community of learners to facilitate discourse and reflection" (p. 23). TEACH-NOW's use of virtual class sessions was a point of pride for

the program and was promoted as an indicator of the institution's push to innovate. The institution's emphasis on the importance of virtual classes was apparent in the second assignment of the very first module of the teacher certification program, which required teacher candidates to familiarize themselves with the medium: "For this activity, you will meet in the virtual classroom environment with your cohort and become more comfortable using a Virtual Classroom environment as a learning and teaching tool" (Module 1, Activity 2, para. 1).

I found that part of what made virtual classes so important is that they were directly intended to foster the social presence (Garrison, 2017) of the program and promote communication and cohesion amongst participants. This aligns with some of the research on synchronous online classes in higher education, which suggests that students appreciate the interaction and community-building the medium enables (e.g., Falloon, 2011; Giesbers et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2012). At TEACH-NOW this was illustrated through the synchronous discussions and knowledge-sharing the sessions were intended to promote. One instructor emphasized the visual and relational aspect of the virtual class experience: "It matters because it puts a human face to all this digital stuff" (Interview #28, Instructor). Another instructor expanded upon that idea and contrasted virtual classes with asynchronous online learning environments: "I think that because we use Zoom…that it's not like using Blackboard or Moodle where you never see anybody. There really is the personal element that's involved" (Interview #8, Instructor). I discuss candidates' understandings of the virtual class experience later in this chapter.

Collaborative Candidate Cohorts

Positioned as "an essential ingredient" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 21) to its program, collaborative candidate cohorts were the third key element to the structure of TEACH-NOW's certification program. The institution's emphasis on collaboration was illustrated in an internal document where TEACH-NOW drew on Danielson's (2016) ideas about the importance of collegiality and problem-solving amongst teachers and posited that teacher collaboration was central to its approach to teacher preparation: "Research demonstrates teachers learn best from other teachers. That's why the entire [TEACH-NOW] program is structured so that candidates learn as much from other candidates as from [TEACH-NOW's] instructors" (PowerPoint Overview, Slide 10). In other words, TEACH-NOW assumed that in order to develop into effective educators for "tomorrow's students" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1), candidates needed to interact with and learn from not only their course instructors but also with and from their fellow candidates. As a result of that assumption, the institution employed a learning cohort model, which required a group of 12-15 candidates to meet in weekly virtual classes and also to collaborate inside and outside of those synchronous virtual class sessions.

To make its "collaborative learning program" (Program Descriptions, p. 2) possible, however, TEACH-NOW was forced to navigate a complication that resulted directly from its business model. As mentioned earlier, TEACH-NOW aimed to "teach teachers around the world." To do that, the institution maximized the reach of connectivity and offered a preparation program "unconstrained by time and distance" (Garrison, 2017, p. 171). Due to its global accessibility, TEACH-NOW attracted a geographically diverse population of teacher candidates from dozens of countries and

situated in a wide range of time zones. Consequently, candidates were placed in cohorts based on their preferred virtual class time. As the founder and CEO explained, "[T]he way the cohorts are formed, is really based on time availability" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO). The formation of cohorts "based on time availability" often resulted in cohorts comprised not only of candidates representing a variety of geographic locations but also a variety of content areas and grade levels.

This mixed composition reflected the assumption underlying the TEACH-NOW approach that effective teacher preparation was not contingent on content-area or grade-level, but rather could be universalized. In other words, the same program structure and content could be applied to all candidates no matter where or what they intended to teach. In discussing the mixed composition of the candidate cohorts, one TEACH-NOW administrator noted the collaborative benefits of the approach while also noting the amount of "green," meaning new or unfamiliar, work it entailed:

> The amount of "green" work required just to collaborate with a cohort of a mixed group of people, and the excitement level as well, it's so much higher when the cohorts are diverse and that definitely adds to the learning value because they want to know how..."I'm a science teacher in Minnesota, I want to know how this teacher in Taiwan is teaching preschoolers, because I could learn something from there and she could learn something from me." Something like that. There's a lot of power in that. The more diverse the cohorts are, they'll end up learning a lot more. To date, I can assure you, we have never, ever gotten a single complaint from our candidates that "this cohort is too diverse and we find that it hinders our

learning." You'll never hear that. They actually end up learning a lot more from

each other because of that, basically. (Interview #13, Administrator)

I offer more in-depth discussion of TEACH-NOW's universal approach and candidates'

experiences in mixed composition cohorts in the next chapter.

TEACH-NOW's collaborative cohort model was a clear reflection of its mission

and was envisioned as a key element to its program structure from the very beginning.

The same internal document that articulated how TEACH-NOW's emphasis on e-

learning and technology were central to the origin of the institution also highlighted its

deliberate prioritization of collaboration:

> The learning program would be a collaborative learning program with a number
>
> of interaction points, despite it being completely virtual, where candidates would
>
> interact with each other synchronously (live) as well as asynchronously and give
>
> and receive immediate feedback on assessments. (Brief Historical Overview, p. 2)

My examination of TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program suggests that to enact

its collaborative learning program and create interaction points among candidates, the

institution encouraged specific teacher education pedagogies that aligned with Garrison's

(2017) suggestions related to the social presence in an e-learning environment. According

to TEACH-NOW's *Faculty Handbook*, "All of the instructional strategies used in the

program are designed to model learning through collaboration...instructors are

encouraged to establish a student centered virtual class that is engaging and

collaborative" (*Faculty Handbook*, pp. 3-4). To nurture that collaboration, TEACH-NOW

instructors and the program's activities required candidates to engage in a number of

group-based activities including peer reviews of independent work, contributions to

online discussion forums, and breakout groups during virtual classes. During two of the virtual classes I observed, the instructors utilized the breakout room feature on Zoom to coordinate small group discussions and encourage candidate interaction (Observation # 6, Module 5; Observation # 7, Module 6). In addition, I also observed an instructor use virtual class time to coordinate a larger collaborative project that involved candidate interaction outside synchronous class sessions (Observation #4, Module 3). That observation was consistent with one instructor's description of using virtual classes to foster collaboration:

> Each week depending on the module they know we have at least one collaborative assignment, so I set my VCs up where they have breakout session time to do just that, so they can talk to each other and plan and often if they're in a breakout that's who they're going to work with that week, and they can use some of that time to get the logistics. Oh, we're going to meet on this day or we're going to use WhatsApp to collaborate. (Interview #5, Instructor)

A specific example of the program's collaborative focus was exhibited in an activity called "Collaboration Tools" that came in the first module. In that activity, clear connections were made across the program's use of technology, cohort collaboration, and candidates' teaching practice. The activity stated, "One of the keys to success in this program is using technology tools to collaborate with your cohort and then transfer that knowledge into your teaching practice" (Module 1, Activity 3, para. 1). That activity went on to ask candidates to use the discussion forum on the learning platform to engage with their cohort members about networking tools. Reflecting what the program considered to be key collaborative experiences, the activity specifically required

candidates to focus their forum discussion on tools that would help them: "Get to know each other; Meet virtually to discuss group work; Share resources and ideas; Do project work together; Peer review and give feedback to each other" (Module 1, Activity 3, para. 5).

When considering how TEACH-NOW privileged collaboration, it is important to acknowledge that perceptions of what constitutes an authentic and meaningful collaborative learning experience vary. That variation raises interesting questions: Is collaboration in digital spaces as effective as it is in the physical real? Is it more effective? Is there truly any difference? When it comes to shaping the professional practices of future teachers, these questions are especially important and I address them later in this chapter.

Activity-Based Assessment Strategy

The fourth key element of the structure of the teacher certification program at TEACH-NOW was based on the institution's emphasis on "learn by doing" (*Mentor Handbook*, p. 5) and a coherent understanding across administrators and instructors that demonstrating new learning was key to effective teacher preparation (*Curriculum Development Manual*). One administrator described that viewpoint as a focus on the "process of doing":

> We want them to *do* rather than just read and absorb. That's one of the key things. In the process of doing, they learn a lot more because they have to do a lot more research, they have to do a lot more study, they have to do a lot more collaboration, learning from each other, a lot of that. So, actual learning happens in that. (emphasis added, Interview #13, Administrator)

My analysis indicates that "learn by doing" manifested in the teacher certification program through an activities-based assessment strategy.

The assessments in the teacher certification program at TEACH-NOW represented an innovative departure from the traditional assessment paradigm. Centered on a belief that "demonstrating new learning is a better measure of teacher effectiveness than traditional tests and assessments" (*Curriculum Development Manual*, p. 4), the institution employed an assessment strategy focused on "problem-based" activities and collaborative projects. According to the *Curriculum Development Manual*:

> Problem-based learning is one of the cornerstones of [TEACH-NOW's] programs. Candidates are expected to participate in active problem solving activities and project assignments. These activities require candidates to work individually as well as in groups to develop ideas and solutions to tackle common issues faced by teachers while preparing for instruction or teaching in the classroom. Adding this focus to problem solving ensures that the learners goes through an active learning experience rather than a passive one of simply reading about or watching other teachers' experiences. (p. 13)

TEACH-NOW's stated emphasis on problem-based learning aligned with the "cognitive presence" of Garrison's (2017) Community of Inquiry framework, which calls for educators to create e-learning experiences that enable high-order thinking. According to Garrison (2017), "[C]ognitive presence means facilitating the analysis, construction, and confirmation of meaning and understanding within a community of learners through sustained reflection and discourse" (p. 50). Based on my analysis, TEACH-NOW

recognized the importance of that cognitive presence in an e-learning experience and thus incorporated reflection and opportunities for discussion throughout its required activities.

It is also critical to note that TEACH-NOW's activity-based assessment strategy was standardized in that the required activities were the same for all candidates in the teacher certification program, and despite the ethnic and geographic diversity of the candidate population, they were always presented in English. In other words, all TEACH-NOW teacher candidates—no matter their cohort, instructors, or location—were responsible for completing the same series of approximately 100 activities (*Quality Assurance Plan*). This uniform assessment strategy was consistent with the mixed composition of TEACH-NOW's teacher candidate cohorts as detailed above. The assessment strategy reflected TEACH-NOW's assumption that effective teacher preparation could be universalized, an idea I elaborate in Chapter Five.

The performance outcomes and requirements of each of those activities corresponded with the focus of a given module and, in line with the program's mission and emphasis on technology, frequently required the use of digital tools (*Quality Assurance Plan*). Each activity also included a list of resources which were categorized as either "required study" or "reference material" and often included related articles, websites, and/or video clips. Instructors assessed and provided feedback on student performance on a majority of the program's activities using TEACH-NOW rubrics that were comprised of "clear, consistent, specific, and measurable criteria" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 28) and reflected the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards as well as TEACH-NOW's "focus on collaboration and effective use of technology" (*Quality Assurance Plan*, p. 28). According to the *Catalog*

and Candidate Handbook, the rubrics aligned with activity requirements and were made available to candidates on the learning platform ahead of time. Activity rubrics included four levels of performance: insufficient, basic, proficient, and outstanding.

In Table 5, I provide examples of an activity, performance outcomes, and report requirements from each of the program's eight modules. The activities I've selected for this table reflect TEACH-NOW's emphasis on technology; they also underscore that TEACH-NOW's focus was on individual as well as collaborative work and that its aim was to get candidates to "tackle common issues faced by teachers while preparing for instruction or teaching in the classroom" (*Curriculum Development Manual,* p. 13).

Table 5

Example Activity Titles and Related Performance Outcomes and Report Requirements

Activity Title	Performance Outcomes	Report Requirements
Using the Virtual Classroom and Video Tools (Module 1, Unit 1, Activity 2)	-Candidates use the virtual class environment as a tool for learning and teaching -Candidates discuss the various uses of video as a tool for learning and teaching and share ideas for creating, editing, annotating and sharing videos	-Participation in the virtual classroom -Create and share a video on a topic discussed in the virtual classroom -Comment on a peer's video submission or start/continue a conversation in the discussion forum post on your learnings, ideas, and/or questions
Students with Learning Difficulties (Module 2, Unit 3, Activity 2)	Candidates identify signs that a student is struggling and discuss possible ways to help students with disabilities or refer them for special education services	-Post a summary of teacher interviews in the discussion forum -Post strategies for differentiated instruction in a single cohort thread in the discussion forum -Create a flowchart illustrating the special education process in your classroom using Coggle or MindMaple
Mobile Learning (Module 3, Unit 3, Activity 2)	Candidate research the use of mobile devices for facilitating student project work	-VoiceThread with summary of cohort discussions and student consultations, and descriptions of using mobile devices for student project work inside and outside of the classroom -Peer review of one other cohort member's VoiceThread
Co-Planning Norms, Procedures, and Transitions (Module 4, Unit 3, Activity 2)	Candidates will collaborate and create uniform norms, procedures, and transitions for students in a school	-10-15 minute group presentation in the VC on uniform norms, procedures, and transitions

Designing Formative Assessments (Module 5, Unit 1, Activity 1)	Candidates select and modify three forms of formative assessments that meet their grade level and subject area assignment.	-Description of the three formative assessments for the grade level and subject you are or will be teaching in Google Docs -Demonstration of at least one assessment using an online or offline tool as discussed with the cohort
Write a Unit Plan (Module 6, Unit 2, Activity 2)	Candidates plan an objective-oriented unit that outlines summative and formative assessments, designs projects and activities with differentiation, for all the lessons within the unit.	-Completed Unit Plan Template with prerequisite skills, summative assessment(s), formative assessments, lesson descriptions with differentiation strategies, and next steps after completing -Peer review of at least two other cohort member's unit plan
First Lesson Plan for Clinical Practice (Module 7, Unit 2, Activity 1)	Candidates plan a lesson with a mentor for the first week of clinical practice	-Detailed lesson plan using the Teach-Now template -Summary notes or video of the lesson plan discussion with the mentor
Baseline Video and Reflection (Module 8, Unit 1, Activity 1)	-Candidates record their own teaching practice as a means of examining and reflecting upon their own practice -Candidates understand how students grow and develop across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas -Candidates design and implement developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences in their classroom -Candidates assess their skills for designing and implementing developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences in their classroom	-Edited and annotated video of your teaching based on Standard 1, Student Development -Lesson plan for the lesson taught in the video -Comprehensive reflection about how you demonstrated in the video that you met Standard 1, Student Development -Video or audio of debriefing with your mentor

As Table 5 shows, TEACH-NOW required candidates to consider issues related to students' learning needs (e.g., students with disabilities, use of differentiation, classroom procedures) and the use of digital tools (e.g., MindMaple, mobile devices, VoiceThread) while also examining and reflecting upon key aspects of their teaching practice such as planning and assessment.

Overall, I suggest TEACH-NOW's "learn by doing" emphasis and its framing of assignments as activities and/or projects operated based on two key assumptions about

learning to teach. First, the standardization of its activity-based assessment strategy reflected TEACH-NOW's perspective that, despite differences in context and content-area, a diverse population of candidates could become "proficient 21st century teachers" via a uniform set of experiences. Second, and related to the notion above, the institution's activity-based assessment strategy also reflected an assumption that the complex task of learning to teach could result from performance and task completion.

In considering these assumptions, it is essential to ponder the nature of what it means to "do." Is to "do" simply to complete? Or is to "do" a more involved experience? Turkle (2015) and Garrison (2017) are once again helpful here. Driven by our digital culture, Turkle (2015) characterizes a particular way of thinking, which draws its name from the digital applications that support our technology-centric lives—the "app way of thinking" (p. 323). The "app way of thinking," Turkle argues, leads to an algorithmic view of the world in which "[c]ertain actions will lead to predictable results" (p. 323). We become dependent on that predictability, and when it is disrupted, we grow anxious (Turkle, 2015). We find a certain level of comfort in the "reactive and transactional" (p. 319) nature of our exchanges. And as it relates to e-learning, in particular, Garrison (2017) cautions that online learning experiences should not serve merely as trivial or transactional interactions nor should they reflect the "repackag[ing] of passive educational designs" (p. 2).

Both Garrison and Turkle above offer valuable perspectives about the nature of "doing" and learning in the digital age. What impact does our comfort in "reactive and transactional" experiences have on our lives, jobs, and, as it relates here, educational experiences? As technology allows for aspects of our lives and learning to grow

increasingly predictable and transactional, where is the space for instability, uncertainty, and spontaneity? In the often difficult and complex experience of learning to teach, understanding just *what* constitutes "the process of doing" (Interview #13, Administrator) is important. Therefore, in Chapter Five, I explore the "what" of TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation by examining the content of its teacher certification program and the knowledge sources TEACH-NOW employed to inform and legitimize that content.

TEACH-NOW Teacher Candidates and the Push to Innovate

In the sections above, I argued that TEACH-NOW was driven by the aspiration to provide an innovative approach to teacher preparation. I also argued that as a result of its strong intention to innovate, the institution conceptualized and enacted a coherent, mission-driven approach to teacher preparation. However, understanding TEACH-NOW's push to innovate from the perspectives of its administrators and instructors provides only a partial picture of how that push impacted teacher preparation at the institution. In order to gain a more complete view, in this section I draw mainly on data from teacher candidate interviews and from observations to analyze how TEACH-NOW's push to innovate shaped candidates' understandings and experiences of the process of learning to teach. As I show below and elaborate further in Chapter Five, the innovation-legitimation "push and pull" exhibited in TEACH-NOW's approach necessitated a self-managed experience of learning to teach.

As it relates to TEACH-NOW's push to innovate, I argue that candidates' experiences with the innovative aspects of TEACH-NOW's preparation program aligned with the assumptions underlying the institution's business model, its emphasis on

technology, and its program structure. Specifically, consistent with the institutional assumptions detailed above, I found that TEACH-NOW candidates also assumed that the process of learning to teach could be "individualized, low cost, efficient, [and provided] as needed" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 2) and that technology was key to teaching in the 21st century. As Figure 4 illustrates, I suggest that although candidates acknowledged certain tradeoffs, they had similar views that TEACH-NOW's approach resulted in a self-managed experience of learning to teach.
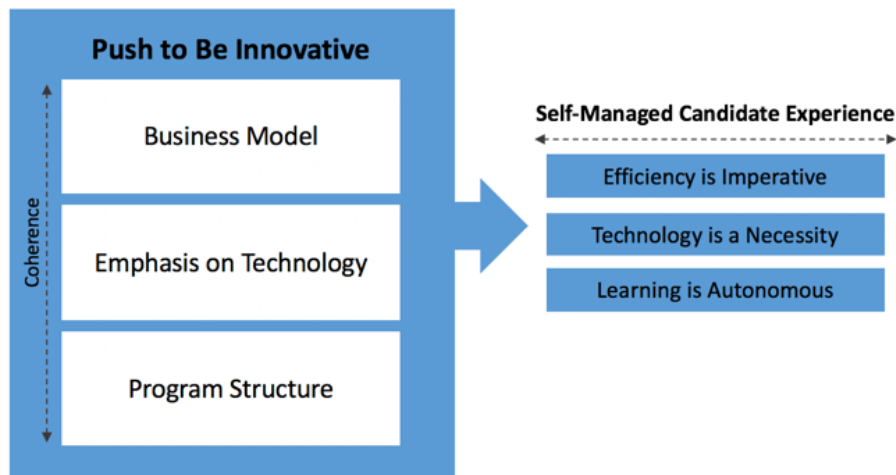
Figure 4. TEACH-NOW teacher candidates and the push to innovate.

Instead of being constrained by the perceived rigidity and inefficiency of more "traditional" approaches to teacher preparation, TEACH-NOW candidates self-managed their program experiences based on the following three notions: 1) efficiency is imperative; 2) technology is a necessity; 3) learning is autonomous. I detail candidates' understandings of each of those notions below.

Efficiency is Imperative: "It Works Really Well"

All 10 of the teacher candidates/program graduates I interviewed said they were drawn to TEACH-NOW's efficient approach to preprofessional teacher preparation and

each identified its streamlined, flexible nature and/or low cost as central contributing factors to their enrollment. In fact, my analysis suggests that for TEACH-NOW candidates, efficiency was imperative. For example, one candidate stated:

> I found out it was much cheaper and you can actually finish in nine months, and I thought, you know what, that I can afford and I get my certificate, what, within a year? If I pass the [licensure] test. So I thought, oy, that's a very good idea. So I did it. (Interview #18, Candidate)

Another candidate shared a similar appreciation for the length of the program and compared it to more "traditional" program lengths: "[O]ne of the biggest draws for me, especially at my age, is that I can do this within nine months or a year. I'm taking that route as opposed to two [years]" (Interview #21, Candidate).

Other candidates focused more explicitly on TEACH-NOW's efficiency as it related to program cost. For example, one candidate "basically chose it for the cost" (Interview #7, Candidate), while another "looked at more traditional colleges...and then, they were really, really expensive" (Interview #17, Candidate) and ultimately enrolled at TEACH-NOW in-part for its price point. That same candidate also noted the convenient nature of the program and expressed appreciation for the ability to access coursework day and night:

> For me, it works really well because I work full time and I have a one-year-old. So I love that I can just access the portal at any time. If it's just middle of the night, if I can't sleep, I go ahead and do some work. I love that aspect about it. You can access the material, everything you need, all right there. (Interview #17, Candidate)

That idea that "it works really well" encapsulated a shared understanding among teacher candidates about the value of efficiency in teacher preparation. Although as individuals they were differently attracted by the program's cost, length, and accessibility, all candidates appreciated how the program's efficient structure and delivery helped to meet their specific needs and expectations.

However, with efficiency can come tradeoffs. Our technology-enhanced ability to multitask raises concerns about the compromises that come with new societal expectations about time management. Specifically, Turkle (2017) cautions that "technology-induced pressure for volume and velocity" (p. 166) may inhibit our ability to take time to contemplate the more complicated aspects of life. While TEACH-NOW clearly leveraged the "new notion of time" that technological innovations enable to offer a cost-effective and flexible teacher preparation pathway, my analysis suggests that the efficiency of the program created stress for some candidates.

For certain candidates that stress manifested from the program's accelerated pace, while for others it came as a result of factors related to the program's streamlined format. As one candidate put it, "The fact that it is nine months. It can seem extremely stressful while you are studying and doing the assignments, but I think it's great because you are on the go, and you really haven't lost momentum" (Interview #20, Candidate). A program graduate echoed those thoughts and indicated that the layering of candidate responsibilities created a sense of being overwhelmed:

> [Y]ou will find that people are pretty, pretty stressed out in Module 3 when they are required to learn all of those different types of [technology] platforms at the

same time as completing their assignments and doing all the research to get the

final product put together. (Interview #1, Graduate)

That stress was apparent in my observation of a Module 3 virtual class session where

candidates discussed the difficulty of the past week's activity and then congratulated each

other for completing it (Observation #4, Module 3). Similarly, in another session I

observed, candidates talked about their struggles with the workload and technical issues

(Observation #3, Module 2). Furthermore, TEACH-NOW instructors understood the

stress the program created for some candidates. According to one instructor, "[I]t's

condensed into nine months, which is really, really taxing to some of the candidates

because they don't expect the amount of work that they're going to have" (Interview #8,

Instructor). Another instructor expanded upon that idea and explained, "They just think

online is online. 'I don't have to go to a building,' which for some people they really like

it. Some people thrive in it, and some people take a while to get used to the routine and

learn time management skills" (Interview #5, Instructor).

Of course, stress and being overwhelmed are common occurrences in graduate

education, but in the case of TEACH-NOW, I found the technology-enabled efficiency of

the program created a teacher preparation experience that maximized velocity.

Nonetheless, and connecting back to the institution's fulfillment of a specific teacher

preparation market need, I argue that such velocity—no matter the stress or pressure it

may have induced—was worth it to candidates for pragmatic reasons. As one candidate

explained, "But it is quick and...Some of the weeks are really heavy workload, but mostly

it's manageable. And I think it's rigorous enough to feel like it's worthwhile" (Interview

#16, Candidate). In reference to cohort members' reasons for enrolling, that same

candidate explained, "[M]ost of us are just pragmatically doing this for job purposes" (Interview #16, Candidate) and pointed to pay bumps and new job opportunities as key motivators for candidates. Another candidate put it more bluntly: "TEACH-NOW was literally a professional hoop that I wanted to jump through" (Interview #7, Candidate). That pragmatic aspect aligns with TEACH-NOW's assertion that it "streamlin[ed] the steps to licensure by allowing [candidates] to continue doing what [they're] doing while acquiring [their] certification to teach" (TEACH-NOW, 2018a, para. 4). Given that two-thirds of TEACH-NOW candidates were already in-service teachers working in their own classrooms (*Quality Assurance Plan*), that practicability made sense. Overall, I found that TEACH-NOW candidates and graduates considered the velocity of the program a fair tradeoff given they were able to continue working, teaching, and/or parenting while earning their needed and/or desired teacher certification.

Technology is a Necessity: "Technology is Really Important"

Along similar lines to their understandings about efficiency in preparation, nine out of the 10 candidates/program graduates I interviewed discussed the pragmatic aspects of TEACH-NOW's focus on digital tools and 21st century skills and viewed their development as tech-savvy educators as a matter of simple necessity. In other words, those nine candidates/graduates saw technology as a highly relevant, if not, integral component of not only their individual preparation experiences but also their current and/or future practice as teachers. As one candidate put it, "I mean, I think everybody kind of agrees that technology is really important, because it's just kind of the way of the future" (Interview #24, Candidate).

In terms of TEACH-NOW's e-learning experience and module-based format, candidates recognized that the nature of online learning differs from that of face-to-face experiences. Some praised the experience and viewed it as an improvement over more traditional learning environments or past online learning experiences. For example, one program graduate highlighted how TEACH-NOW's online module-based format made the graduate rethink the structure of educational experiences:

> Well, I really like the online setup for a couple reasons. The first reason is, the module by module format is so much more intuitive and so much more user-friendly. Really, doing it made me think back to college and made me think to myself, "Why did we even do it that way? Why was I taking five classes at the same time?" (Interview #2, Graduate)

The sentiments of this candidate are consistent with Garrison's (2017) assertion that e-learning experiences can "facilitate an enhanced, yet more convenient and in many cases less expensive, educational approach" (p. 142). Another candidate touched upon that notion and saw TEACH-NOW's utilization of e-learning as innovative and forward-thinking:

> Honestly, I think that…the future of a lot of educational institutions is online-based…Universities and schools are going to quit hiring bodies, and they're just going to start hiring these online VC Zoom-type kind of instructors, which would be way cheaper for them, probably smarter. (Interview #24, Candidate)

That same candidate went on to highlight the advantages of TEACH-NOW's use of synchronous virtual classes in its e-learning environment explaining, "It's actually a little bit better of an experience than sitting in a classroom of 100-plus people while a

professor gives a PowerPoint presentation. But I'd say that's pretty beneficial" (Interview #24, Candidate).

Yet not all candidates I interviewed adapted so easily or willingly to that "new form of learning" (Interview #2, Graduate). One candidate simply stated, "I don't love online learning. I don't think it's as effective, necessarily, as face to face." A second expressed initial unease with the experience of the virtual classes, in particular:

The virtual meetings [were] kind of weird for me at first. I hadn't done a lot of those, but I'm finally getting used to that and I feel comfortable communicating with everyone that way. But it kind of felt weird, and I didn't care for it as much at the beginning. (Interview #17, Candidate)

A third candidate described a longing for a learning experience that allowed for a more traditional student-teacher relationship:

I think the teacher student contact time is far less when you're doing an online program. Most of the time you're doing the learning on your own… you have one hour with your instructor, and this is one of the things I think that me and my cohort members struggle with, because we came from, you know, our experience learning is in like a regular school, a brick-and-mortar school. So I think even up to now we're longing for that, how do I say this? Like being the student where the teacher feeds you what you need to learn, and we're still trying to adjust to how we're supposed to be learning online. (Interview #18, Candidate)

The sentiments of the three candidates detailed above align to a degree with Turkle's (2015) perspective on the tradeoffs that can arise when an educational experience is structured around technology. Related to technology's influence on higher

education, in particular, Turkle (2015) posits, "When we want technology to provide a simple fix for the problems of higher education, we necessarily idealize the online experience" (p. 233). Turkle points to the increasing popularity of massive open online courses (MOOCs) as an example of that idealization:

> In the case of education, once MOOCs were declared a benign revolution that would solve many problems—from lack of student attention to our problems in measuring educational "productivity"—its imperatives had to be presented in a positive light. So, the imperative to learn from an online video had to be a good thing. It surely is, sometimes. In some courses. For some students. But not all the time. For all students. In all courses. (pp. 232-233)

Thus, in considering TEACH-NOW's enactment of its online teacher certification program, it is essential to recognize that such an approach, while perhaps in line with current educational trends and innovations, may not be appropriate for all those looking to learn how to teach. In other words, even if a program creates "an enhanced, yet more convenient" (Garrison, 2017, p. 145) learning experience, that experience may not fully meet the needs of all students. Yet, as discussed earlier, for TEACH-NOW candidates, any personal dislike or discomfort with e-learning was outweighed by the efficiency and self-management afforded by the program's innovative approach.

Furthermore, despite varying opinions on their own experiences of a tech-centric learning environment, a majority of the candidates I interviewed supported TEACH-NOW's assumption that technology is key to teaching and learning in the digital age and understood the importance of their development into "proficient 21st century teachers." In other words, the candidates knew that their individual teaching practice would benefit

from their being tech-savvy. The thoughts of a program graduate illustrated that shared perspective:

> Any teacher that's entering the classroom in 2018 has to be well-versed in even the most basic digital tools. To certify a teacher without requiring that, I think, is doing a disservice to the teacher and is doing a disservice to the profession as a whole. (Interview #2, Graduate)

A candidate located in a developing country in central Asia offered a more detailed perspective and represented candidates' overall attitudes about the importance of technology in education and to their teaching practice, in particular:

> [T]o be in a cohort, or to be in a program which teaches us so much about the use of technology, it is great because tomorrow's world is about technology. My son uses so much technology in the American school that he goes to. So for me, it's great that I know it; I have learned it, and now I can judge and say, "This is what I can use with my limited availability, or whatever resources I have." I think the emphasis on technology, using it in the classroom and using it for our assignments, is great. I have learned a lot about some really good applications, which I can teach my students as well, and I can help them become more prepared for the time when...because we've got international students, for when they go back to their countries, which are in Europe; some are in more developed countries in Central Asia, or other countries. I can prepare them… So yes, I feel a lot more equipped with this experience and knowledge. (Interview #20, Candidate)

Along similar lines, and touching upon TEACH-NOW's focus on "tomorrow's learning world," another candidate explained, "I do think it's really important to use technology because I think that's where we're headed, and it's a great skill for students to have because how do we even know what we're preparing them for?" (Interview #17, Candidate). A program graduate was more succinct: "Well, technology plays a vital role in the classroom…I guess I do not conceive teaching at this point without technology" (Interview # 6, Graduate).

While according to yet another candidate, TEACH-NOW's online delivery and emphasis on digital awareness "forc[ed]" candidates to become comfortable with technology (Interview #7, Candidate), one program graduate I interviewed felt differently. Connecting back to the notion of "volume and velocity" (Turkle, 2017, p. 166) discussed earlier, that graduate reported feeling stressed by the program's focus on technology and claimed not to "realize how big of a learning curve it would be" (Interview #1, Graduate). While acknowledging that "[w]e are in such a digital age" and expressing appreciation for the flexibility and convenience enabled by the program's online delivery, that graduate nonetheless suggested:

> I think if I knew how much technology was involved in the TEACH-NOW program, I probably would have shied away from it. One, because technology is not very reliable in the situation that I'm in. I live in a, I think, 3,000 year old village in China. (Interview #1, Graduate)

The hesitation voiced by the graduate above offered a contrasting perspective on the perceived ubiquity of technology and its importance in teaching and learning.

Although "technologies of connection" are increasing educational opportunities around the globe, access to 21st century digital tools varies as a result economic, political, and geographic factors. Thus, the thoughts of a U.S.-based candidate served as a valuable reminder that, as Turkle (2015) suggests, it may be important to sometimes push back against the pressure to utilize technology in the classroom. According to that candidate:

> [T]he kids are very much attuned to technology…So to some extent I think it's important to leverage that skillset that they have, and that interest that they have to expand their knowledge. There are lots of exciting tools out there that you can use to do that. On the other hand, I also think it's really important for someone to be able to do math without a calculator and to read a book. (Interview # 16, Candidate)

The ability to do math and to read are not 21st century skills; they are basic skills needed by students in high-tech and low-tech learning environments alike. Thus, as a teacher preparation provider, it was also TEACH-NOW's responsibility to ensure its candidates were equipped to meet the non-technological learning needs of their students. I examine how TEACH-NOW took up that responsibility in Chapter Five.

Learning is Autonomous: "It is What You Put Into It"

In speaking about the experience of being a candidate in TEACH-NOW's certification program, one candidate speculated:

> I think it is what you put into it. If you want to go and you want to see all of the resources and you want to click on all of the related videos and links associated with them, it can be pretty time consuming, especially if you've got to wait until

the kids go to bed and start studying or watching videos or reading articles at

10:00 p.m. or whatever. But I think a lot of the work can be done quite quickly if

you wanted to, but you're not going to get a very good grade, but you would pass,

I think. (Interview #24, Candidate)

Embedded in this candidate's speculation is an understanding that the process of learning

to teach at TEACH-NOW was an autonomous experience wherein candidates were in

control and could decide, based on preference and individual circumstances, how they

navigated the program's structure. My analysis indicates that candidates' autonomy over

their learning most often manifested through their level of engagement in their virtual

classes and collaborative experiences and through their approach to the program's

activity-based assessment strategy.

As detailed earlier, by utilizing virtual classes and candidate cohorts, the

administrators and instructors at TEACH-NOW aimed to construct an experience of

learning to teach for its candidates rooted in collaboration. In positioning collaboration as

an essential element to the structure of its teacher preparation program, TEACH-NOW

reflected Garrison's (2017) assertion that collaboration is "at the heart of most social

human endeavors not the least of which is the educational enterprise" (p. 170). Yet,

Garrison also notes that "collaboration is more than connecting students to information

and each other" (p. 170). Furthermore, while agreeing that collaboration is central to

education, Turkle (2015) urges us to explore what might get lost when collaborative

learning experiences take place exclusively in digital spaces. In particular, Turkle

expresses concerns about the "inattention" (p. 244)—or heightened distraction—that

technology enables during online collaborative experiences including the lure of online

shopping or the ease of text messaging. One can contribute to a Google Chat or shared

Google Doc and make it seem like he or she is actively engaged while doing other things

online. Turkle (2015) calls this "the simulation of focused attention" (p. 245). In addition,

Turkle (2015) suggests that the "intellectual serendipity" (p. 245) that so often occurs in

face-to-face meetings—meaning the joke-telling, collective non-sequiturs, or random

turns in conversation—are less likely to occur during online collaborative experiences

because participants are more interested in efficiency and practicality.

My analysis of candidates' experiences indicated that some candidates' views of

the program's virtual classes and collaborative work aligned with Garrison's perspective

while others reflected a stance more aligned with the type of engagement Turkle notes.

Reflecting Garrison's (2017) idea of "cognitive presence," some candidates understood

virtual classes and collaborative work as what Garrison would describe as a movement

"beyond the self and into a shared and distributed learning environment that offers the

possibility to collaboratively monitor and manage the learning transaction" (p. 60). For

example, one candidate linked the program's collaborative aspects to critical thinking:

> When we're asked to evaluate other candidates and also to review each other, I
>
> think that's where we get into a lot of critical thinking. Like thinking about in our
>
> experience is this actually going to work? What could be made better? (Interview
>
> # 16, Candidate)

Similarly, a second candidate noted that virtual classes created opportunities for

knowledge-sharing: "VCs are a lot of discussion about all of this: what we have learned,

how we have implemented it, how we do things better. We share knowledge" (Interview

#20, Candidate). That candidate expressed deep appreciation for that collaborative

learning experience and stated, "I think our cohort has a great camaraderie. I actually love the cohort that I'm in." Similarly, a third candidate enthused, "The meetings were fantastic. I had no idea you could look at 12 people at the same time and all converse, show your work from your own computer to everyone. How awesome is that?" (Interview #21, Candidate). That same candidate went on to explain how learning from and collaborating with cohort members resulted in a broadened worldview:

> It was worldwide. I just was in awe of my colleagues all around the world. From London to Dubai to Egypt. The experiences they were going through or the challenges they faced. So it definitely opened up my eyes to the world, and what education means around the world. (Interview #21, Candidate)

While that candidate found virtual classes to be "fantastic" and learned from cohort members' experiences, others understood and managed the required collaborative aspects of the program differently. For example, one candidate I interviewed took the position that virtual classes were not "where much learning happened" and stated that if the instructor spent too much time reviewing the assignments, "I could have just usually skipped that hour and just read through the assignment itself" (Interview #7, Candidate). Nonetheless, that candidate also acknowledged that virtual classes were likely "really helpful" for some candidates and noted that "there was definitely some community building in [the candidate's] cohort." A second candidate's experience in virtual classes reflected Turkle's (2015) concerns about "inattention" (p. 244), heightened distraction, and multitasking. That candidate struggled with engagement during virtual classes and explained:

Well, it's easier to check out if you're not really disciplined or if I don't get enough

coffee before six a.m. I catch myself reading Google news instead of attending the

lesson, if it's gone in a direction that doesn't keep me interested. And then I think

well, I'd be mad if my students were reading the news, so I come back. (Interview

#16, Candidate)

Connecting to Turkle's (2015) idea of "the simulation of focused attention" (p. 245), that

candidate also reported that during virtual classes "[p]eople play games on their phone.

They're like, here's a tip, if you put the WeChat on your computer then [the instructor]

won't know that you're chatting with us…So yeah, it seems very, I don't know, kind of

'high school-y' in a way" (Interview #16, Candidate). Along similar lines, a program

graduate's experience with TEACH-NOW's collaborative activities also reflected

Turkle's (2015) concerns about attention and meaningful contribution in digital spaces.

According to that graduate:

The funny thing is that even though there were tools available, we just did the

work. "Okay, so you're going to do this part, you're going to do this chunk, so you

do the other chunk," and then we just put it together. Right? So it was not really,

really like a real collaboration. It was, but not how it was meant to be. (Interview

#6, Graduate)

That approach to collaboration was also consistent to a degree with Turkle's (2015)

notion that we find comfort in the "reactive and transactional" (p. 319) nature of our

technology-enabled exchanges and the capacity of technology to streamline productivity.

In writing about that capacity in relation to productivity in higher education settings, in

particular, Turkle (2015) argues, "Gchat and Google Docs got the job done by classical

'productivity' measures. But the value of what you produce, what you 'make,' in college is not just the final paper; it's the process of making it" (p. 244). In noting that collaborative work was done in a way "not how it was meant to be," the graduate quoted above seemed to recognize Turkle's notion that the process is just as important as the product. Nevertheless, that graduate took the streamlined, more transactional approach.

I also found that some TEACH-NOW candidates' desire for the satisfaction of transaction and predictability (Turkle, 2015) was fulfilled in their self-directed approach to the program's activity-based assessment strategy. Three candidates highlighted TEACH-NOW's use of standardized rubrics as key to how they managed their work. One candidate explained, "I think it's great because the rubric is laid out ahead of time. You get to see it. So you kind of know...like did I fulfill these requirements?" (Interview #17, Candidate). A second candidate echoed a similar approach: "[T]he strategy is looking at the rubric and seeing what's required for a four, and hitting all of those bases" (Interview #16, Candidate). A third candidate connected that idea to collaborative group work and pointed to the rubrics as motivation:

> So especially in the collaborations, what we do is we say, hey, this is what
>
> outstanding says we have to do, so let's strive for that. Even if it says 'the
>
> candidate uses two to three examples,' let's go for four so we can make sure we
>
> check all the boxes and go a little bit further so we can make sure we get the
>
> highest grade possible. (Interview #24, Candidate)

The approaches outlined by the three candidates quoted above reflect autonomous, self-directed approach to meeting the requirements of TEACH-NOW's activity-based

assessments. They leveraged the program's uniform and transparent structure to guide their work and learning in the manner that best fit their personal circumstances.

Overall, I found that the self-managed experience of learning to teach at TEACH-NOW contributed to its candidates' satisfaction with the program. In fact, five candidates/graduates mentioned they had "convinced" or "recruited" others to enroll (Interviews #2, #18, #24, Candidates/Graduates) or had/would recommend the program (Interviews # 7, #6, Candidates/Graduates). That satisfaction and willingness to recommend the program aligns with institutional data provided to me by TEACH-NOW after the major data generation period for this study. In TEACH-NOW's 2019 survey of over 700 program graduates, 92.7% of those surveyed rated the program as "excellent" or "very good," and 91.2% said they would recommend the program to a colleague or friend (2019 Alumni Survey). In Chapter Five, I discuss how the pull of legitimacy further contributed to the self-managed candidate experience and their satisfaction with TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that TEACH-NOW aimed to be a "game-changer in the industry" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO) and pushed hard to create an innovative approach to teacher preparation. To support that innovation, I found TEACH-NOW conceptualized and enacted a highly coherent, mission-driven approach to teacher preparation, which resulted in its teacher candidates self-managing their program experiences based on their individual needs, preferences, and circumstances. Furthermore, I suggested that TEACH-NOW's flagship teacher certification program embodied a notion of teaching and learning that maximized the possibilities of

technology and fully embraced a world in which constant connectivity is understood as a positive advancement to education, in general, and to learning to teach, in particular. Operating based upon that notion, the institution recognized the potential of technology both to support its mission to offer a preparation program to teachers around the world and to enable its goal of providing that program in a fast, flexible, and affordable manner.

Yet, as I indicated throughout the chapter, with innovation can come uncertainty. Technological advancement may make the delivery and structure of a preparation experience more accessible and appealing to 21st century teacher candidates, but as I illustrated above, it may also present tradeoffs. Thus, I suggest that it is essential to consider how increased connectivity as well as transformed understandings of time, collaboration, and thinking impact what it means to learn to teach via a primarily virtual experience. Garrison (2017) argues, "As we shift from a focus on the gee-whiz factor of technology and amusing but trivial applications…Serious educators will recognize the potential of new and emerging communications technology and that education is about community and thinking and learning collaboratively" (p. 170). Thus, the question is—when do we know for certain we have moved beyond that gee-whiz triviality?

By emphasizing e-learning, collaboration, and "learn by doing" in its online teacher certification program, I suggest that TEACH-NOW trusted that today's communications technology could be leveraged to deliver an effective teacher preparation program. However, in order to overcome concerns that arise from a "gee-whiz" perception of technology, I also found that TEACH-NOW took deliberate steps to demonstrate its quality and credibility. Therefore in the next chapter, I take up the counter force in the complex tension navigated by TEACH-NOW—the pull of legitimacy.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEACH-NOW and the Pull of Legitimacy

In response to an interview question about how he learned about TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program, one program graduate explained:

> I came across this website for this TEACH-NOW, this alternative teaching certification. And I'm like, in theory, it looks great. You know? But I'm thinking, alright, well what is this program all about? Is this some fly-by-night thing? Am I going to pay $6,000 and then, how do I know I'm going to get certified when it's not through…some university that I really recognize? I did some research, and it said it was. They certify you in D.C., so I actually called the D.C. Board of Education and just kind of got through to someone and said, "Look I just want to know, is this program recognized? Is it accepted?" And they said, "Yes it is. It's a reputable program. It's a newer program, but it's reputable." And I said, "Okay."
> (Interview #2, Graduate)

Embedded within this program graduate's story are indicators of the complex tension I identified as emerging from TEACH-NOW's aim to be a "game changer" in the field of teacher preparation. As introduced in Chapter Four, I argue that as a result of that aim, the institution operated at the nexus of a complex tension between the push to be innovative and pull to be legitimate. As illustrated by Figure 3 (see Chapter Four, p. 97), I suggested that the "push and pull" dynamic was played out at TEACH-NOW in five key areas. In the previous chapter, I analyzed the "push" aspect of the dynamic, showing how the tight coherence of three key areas (business model, technology, and program structure) supported an innovative, highly mission-driven approach to teacher

preparation. In this chapter, I analyze the "pull" aspect of the dynamic, arguing that program content and institutional conduct reflected TEACH-NOW's ongoing effort to establish its legitimacy as a teacher preparation provider.

The necessity for TEACH-NOW to establish legitimacy is reflected in the comments of the program graduate quoted above: the graduate's initial worry over TEACH-NOW being a "fly-by-night thing," his concern about it not being a "university that [he] really recogniz[ed]," wanting to ensure the program was "acceptable," and finally, his relief in hearing it was "reputable." TEACH-NOW offered a fully online teacher preparation program situated at a new graduate school of education, unconnected to a university. As such, it is not surprising that TEACH-NOW had to manage the doubts and concerns of prospective teacher preparation consumers—doubts and concerns that arose as a consequence of TEACH-NOW's diversion from teacher preparation traditions. In this chapter, I argue that TEACH-NOW managed these concerns by very deliberately achieving accepted markers of credibility in relation to the content of its teacher preparation program and the conduct of the institution at large. In this way, TEACH-NOW established a teacher preparation program that was not only innovative but also legitimate. In addition, I show that the steps TEACH-NOW took to legitimate its teacher preparation program further contributed to the necessity that teacher candidates self-manage their learning experiences, an argument I introduced in Chapter Four.

To make these arguments, I begin by reviewing the reasons TEACH-NOW needed to legitimate its program in the first place by briefly discussing concerns in the discourse about nGSEs, online teacher preparation, and technology-related innovations in education. I then suggest that in order to address those concerns, the institution attained

perceived markers of credibility within both its program's curricular content and its conduct as an institution of higher education. In terms of its program content, I suggest that TEACH-NOW utilized a universal curriculum rooted in two well-known teacher education knowledge sources and centered on effective instructional practices. In terms of institutional conduct, I suggest that TEACH-NOW's accreditation status, faculty, and affiliations/referrals strengthened its professional reputation, thus helping to make it credible in the eyes of teacher preparation consumers. The chapter concludes with my analysis of how the pull of legitimacy impacted TEACH-NOW's teacher candidates and played a role in shaping their self-managed experiences of learning to teach.

The Concern: "Is This a Real Teaching Certificate?"

At the time data was generated for this case study, the first question listed on the "Frequently Asked Questions" portion of TEACH-NOW's website was as follows: "Is this a real teaching certificate?" (TEACH-NOW, 2018f). That question was immediately followed by this enthusiastic answer: "Absolutely!" (TEACH-NOW, 2018f). TEACH-NOW's need to assert its legitimacy this way on its website reflected institutional awareness of apparent concerns about the institution as a credible teacher preparation provider. I suggest those concerns resulted from the three key areas: 1) criticism in the teacher education discourse about nGSEs; 2) criticism in the teacher education discourse about fully online teacher preparation; 3) larger societal concerns about technology and innovation in education.

First, as I indicated in Chapters One and Two, although nGSEs have garnered significant media attention and funding, they have also been subject to excoriating criticism. This is illustrated by Diane Ravitch's questioning the legitimacy of two nGSEs

as institutions of higher education on her popular blog where she argued, "It is an insult to all graduate schools of education to call Relay and Match 'graduate schools of education'"(Ravitch, 2016, para. 1). In addition, seven of the articles in the small body of extant literature on nGSEs reviewed in Chapter Two represent critiques of nGSEs' approaches to teacher preparation and raise questions about the underlying purposes and assumptions, claims, or policy implications of teacher preparation programs at nGSEs or related independent teacher education entities (Mungal, 2015, 2016; Smith, 2015; Stitzlein & West, 2014; Zeichner, 2016; Zeichner & Conklin, 2016; Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015). For example, Zeichner and Peña-Sandoval (2015) drew attention to the lack of empirical research on the effectiveness and "superiority" (p. 17) of Relay GSE and Match as preparation programs arguing, "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" (p. 17). More recently, in writing about the increasing prevalence of core practices in teacher preparation, Philip et al. (2019) pointed to Match's Sposato GSE and Relay GSE as examples of "technique-focused and reductive readiness approaches" (p. 255) and raise concerns about how such approaches simplify practice and operate based on narrow understandings of justice.

Next, the research reviewed in Chapter Two also suggested that trepidation exists about fully online teacher preparation. Many studies reflected ongoing concerns in the teacher education community about whether fully online programs can really prepare teachers as well as traditional brick-and-mortar programs (e.g., Chiero & Beare, 2010; Daves & Roberts, 2010; Heafner & Petty, 2016; Peterson & Bond, 2004; Stricklin & Tingle, 2016). For example, Heafner and Petty (2016) indicated that "within teacher

education, skepticism exists as colleges of education question the validity and reliability of online programs to prepare teachers" (p. 154). The research also suggests that such skepticism extends beyond those directly involved in teacher education. According to Adams et al. (2012), "As the number of distance education programs leading to teacher certification increases, the question of whether employers will accept this new generation of teachers is a vitally important issue for the teaching profession" (p. 409). Consistent with that comment, a number of extant studies investigated how online teacher preparation is viewed and understood by those working in the P-12 sector and found that P-12 administrators (Adams et al., 2012; Faulk, 2010, 2011a, b; Huss, 2007a, b) as well as veteran in-service teachers (Faulk & King, 2012) had negative perceptions about the ability of fully online programs to produce qualified and effective teachers.

Finally, moving beyond teacher preparation, and as illustrated throughout this dissertation, online learning and technological innovations in higher education often invoke uncertainty. As Garrison (2017) points out, "The one thing that higher education has not been very good at is change" (p. 99). Turkle (2015) helps to illustrate this. From multitasking and texting in class to transcription-like note-taking on laptops to students' increasing preference for online learning experiences, Turkle, a faculty member at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, raises concerns about the "attentional disarray" (p. 211) enabled by digital technologies in higher education settings. According to Turkle (2015), there is value in the "flawed real" (p. 235) of face-to-face, non-technology-centered learning experiences, or as one college student she interviewed put it, there is value in "'showing up to something alive'" (p. 232). However, it is important to note that

the notion that the "flawed real" creates important learning opportunities that are not feasible in digital spaces is contested.

In contrast to Turkle, for example, Garrison (2017) pushes back on the idea that physical spaces represent superior environments for quality learning. According to Garrison (2017):

> The central issue that educational institutions are struggling to adapt to is the reality of a continuously connected society and why students need to be on campus. Traditionally, higher education institutions were defined by place in terms of where the repositories of knowledge physically existed. Clearly, in the Internet age this proposition no longer holds. The real issue is not physical presence but a sense of belonging to a scholarly community. From the perspective of a quality educational experience, place will more and more be addressed by embracing blended approaches to learning that extends the academic community over time and distance. (p. 142)

Despite advocating for the extension of learning over time and distance, Garrison (2017) nonetheless cautions that it "is important that we not make the mistakes of the past by becoming overly enamored by the technology but instead ask what the technology can do to enhance a worthwhile educational experience" (p. 99).

The idea of a "worthwhile educational experience" bridges the three groups of concerns highlighted above. Some think teacher preparation at nGSEs is not worthwhile; others feel that way about online preparation programs. Still, others raise questions about technology and its ability to either facilitate or impede learning in higher education settings. Combined, I argue that such concerns contributed to the pull of legitimacy

experienced by TEACH-NOW and led to the institution's incorporation of the specific markers of credibility I outline below.

Program Content: "Teachers Should Be Prepared to Teach Anywhere"

The four elements of the structure of the teacher certification program at TEACH-NOW described in Chapter Four served as the backbone for perhaps the most crucial part of the program—the content. Supported by a coherent and consistent structure, the content of the teacher certification program was the substance—or the "what"—of the institution's conceptualization and enactment of its approach to teacher preparation. Centered on the notion that "teachers should be prepared to teach anywhere" (Interview #25, Administrator), I argue that the content of TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program represented one way in which TEACH-NOW worked to legitimate its innovative approach to teacher preparation.

Specifically, my analysis suggests that the content of TEACH-NOW's teacher certification program reflected what I describe as a *universal stance on the nature of teaching* that aimed to "prepare educators who are effective in helping *all* students learn" in "*any* learning environment" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 4, emphasis added). Underlying these goals was a vision of good teaching that rested on the assumption that effective teaching strategies are applicable to any learning environment no matter an individual teacher's specific subject-matter, grade level, school, country, or culture. In other words, TEACH-NOW took the position that a generalized teacher preparation approach wherein all candidates, regardless of their content area or school context or national/international location, could learn to teach effectively via a common curriculum. To signal legitimacy very clearly, TEACH-NOW's curriculum was rooted in

the principles underlying the InTASC standards, a widely used set of guidelines for what teachers should know; the curriculum also reflected responsiveness to the well-known concern that new teachers are not prepared for managing the learning environment.

It is important to note here that neither TEACH-NOW's universal stance on teaching nor its focus on effective teaching practices reflected new understandings of the process of learning to teach. In fact, from approximately the 1950s up until the early 1980s, U.S. teacher preparation programs often approached the education of prospective teachers through a "training" lens (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Rooted in the findings of process-product research, teacher preparation during this time period was conceptualized as a "formal educational process intended to ensure that the behaviors of prospective teachers matched those of 'effective' teachers" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 295). The 1970s, in particular, saw the rise of competency-based teacher training programs, which centered on candidates' demonstrating "mastery of the competencies or 'performances' a successful classroom teacher needed to possess" (Lucas, 1997, p. 84). By the mid-1980s, however, understandings about the knowledge and skills required for successful teaching began to shift and expanded to include pedagogical content knowledge, in particular, among a range of other types of teacher knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Gitomer & Zisk, 2015). As a result, teacher preparation programs at the time "assumed that excellent teachers were professionals who were knowledgeable about subject matter and pedagogy and who made decisions, constructed responsive curriculum, and knew how to continue learning throughout the professional lifespan (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 296). Yet, returning to Arthur Levine's 2006 report, *Educating School Teachers*, which I cited at the beginning of this dissertation, by the mid-2000s some felt teacher education had drifted

too far away from practice and effective instruction. Specifically, in writing about

college- and university-based teacher preparation Levine (2006) argued, "The content of

the curriculum is too often a grab bag of courses, ranging across the various subfields of

teacher education from methods to the philosophy and history of education, rather than

the focused preparation needed for real classrooms" (p. 107). Among the several other

teacher education reforms he promoted, Levine suggested that the successful professional

preparation of teachers required education schools to employ a consistent and well-

designed curriculum focused on the knowledge and skills needed to support learning in

P-12 classrooms.

While TEACH-NOW did not reflect a number of the teacher preparation reforms

Levine encouraged in his famous report, I found that its curriculum certainly could not

have been considered "a grab bag of courses." Instead, its content was highly coherent

and focused on what were perceived to be the knowledge and skills needed in "real

classrooms" anywhere. The thoughts of one administrator help to illustrate TEACH-

NOW's universal stance and its focus on preparing its candidates to teach anyone,

anywhere:

> Teachers should be prepared to teach anywhere, anywhere that they want to, in
>
> any learning environment. If they want to teach in an international school, then
>
> they should be able to meet the needs of what that means, basically. If they want
>
> to teach in underserved areas...We've hired, from the examples of our own
>
> candidates, we get a wide spectrum of teaching situations. You may have
>
> candidates who are working in underserved schools, one step away from juvenile
>
> detention schools, to very high end, international schools, with all the possible

equipment and technology at their fingertips. You get a whole wide range of stuff,

people who go through the program, and they all learn, and they all come with the

same goal, to help their students learn. (Interview #25, Administrator)

To fulfill candidates' desire "to help their students learn," TEACH-NOW aligned its

universal curriculum with both the widely-accepted InTASC standards and the growing

movement towards practice-based teacher education. As I show below, TEACH-NOW'S

alignment with both the InTASC standards and with practice-based teacher education

worked in service of its aim to be legitimate.

Standards-Based: "We Use the InTASC Standards to Really Guide Us"

In an internal document outlining TEACH-NOW's history, the following goal

was listed as a key strategy for fulfilling the institution's goals: "Build the program on

internationally renowned InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards" (Brief Historical

Overview, p. 1). My analysis indicates that this goal was fulfilled through not only the

consistent integration of the InTASC standards across the curricular content of TEACH-

NOW's preparation program but also through the consistent positioning of the standards

as a key indicator of the program's credibility.

A product of the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium of the

national, non-profit Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the InTASC

standards were first developed in 1992 and then revised in 2011 (CCSSO, 2011). The

2011 InTASC standards are a "set of model core teaching standards that outline what

teachers should know and be able to do to ensure every K-12 student reaches the goal of

being ready to enter college or the workforce in today's world" (CCSSO, 2011, p. 3).

According to the CCSSO (2011), the standards are intended to "represent the common

principles and foundations of teaching practice that cut across all subject areas and grade levels and that are necessary to improve student achievement" (p. 3). The 10 standards are divided into four categories: 1) The Learner and Learning; 2) Content Knowledge; 3) Instructional Practice; 4) Professional Responsibility (CCSSO, 2011). The three "The Learner and Learning" standards focus on learners' development and differences as well as learning environments. The two "Content Knowledge" standards center on teachers' subject-matter knowledge and application. The three "Instructional Practice" standards cover assessment, planning, and pedagogy. Lastly, the two "Professional Responsibility" standards address teachers' professional development as well as their leadership and collaborative practices (CCSSO, 2011).

It is important to note that since their original release, the InTASC standards have been both criticized and lauded. Over the years, concerns have been raised that the standards take a technicist view of teaching and learning (Hostetler, 2002), that they inadequately address issues related to equity (Beyerbach & Nassoiy, 2004), and that they challenge social justice in teacher education (Dunn, 2016). At the same time, the standards have also been praised as a positive advancement in teacher education in that they ensure professional standards for new teachers across states (Darling-Hammond, 2000) and inform the development of performance-based teacher assessments (Pecheone & Stansbury, 1996). As TEACH-NOW's administrators, instructors, and documents made consistently clear, the institution was in sync with the viewpoints of the standards' proponents. In fact, I suggest that TEACH-NOW's universal stance on the nature of teaching was consistent with CCSSO's (2011) assumption that "common principles and foundations of teaching practice…cut across all subject areas and grade levels" (p. 3). By

using the standards as a guide for its program content, TEACH-NOW reflected an institutional belief in not only the utility but the quality of the InTASC standards as a knowledge source for shaping the process of learning to teach.

The comments of a TEACH-NOW instructor illustrated the institution's alignment with the specific "principles and foundations" emphasized within the standards:

> We use the InTASC standards to really guide us…and it really focuses on what I
> think to be the main components of teaching, which is the instructional cycle:
> assessment, planning, instruction, as well as the professional pieces too. So, we go
> through that, and we weave that into the program. (Interview #10, Instructor)

That "weaving" into the program was made apparent to candidates early on in their TEACH-NOW experiences. The InTASC standards were cited as central to the program during new teacher candidate orientation when TEACH-NOW was described by its founder and CEO as "legitimate and the best" (Observation #2, Orientation). The standards were also mentioned six times in the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook* including in the following paragraph where the standards were connected to the "essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions" that TEACH-NOW deemed its teacher candidates needed to develop:

> To know that candidates are developing the essential knowledge, skills, and
> dispositions that are expected by most states and international schools, TEACH-
> NOW uses the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC)
> standards to assess candidates as they teach in schools during their 12-week
> clinical practice. Rubrics that reflect the InTASC standards and TEACH-NOW's

focus on collaboration and effective use of technology are used for activities

throughout the modules. (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 28)

As that paragraph indicates, TEACH-NOW also used the InTASC standards to

guide the design of the TEACH-NOW Clinical Rubric. This was explicit in the rubric

itself which included the following statement: "The TEACH-NOW Clinical Practice

rubric is an adaptation of the 10 InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, which are

used by many teacher preparation programs across the United States" (TEACH-NOW

Clinical Rubric, p. 1). It was also made clear to the mentor teachers who used that rubric

to evaluate candidates:

TEACH-NOW has adopted the 10 InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards as

the standards that all candidates must strive to meet. The InTASC standards have

been adapted or adopted by most states in the United States and are aligned with

national assessment systems such as EdTPA and the Praxis Performance

Assessment for Teachers (PPAT). (*Mentor Handbook*, p. 6)

Again, both statements reflect how TEACH-NOW positioned the InTASC standards as a

marker of credibility by pointing out that they had been adopted by "many" U.S. teacher

preparation programs and "most" states. Later in this chapter, I show how the standards

were integrated into the content program's activity-based assessments. First, however, I

discuss how TEACH-NOW paired its use of the InTASC standards with a focus on

practice in order to further legitimate its innovative approach to teacher preparation.

Practice-Focused: "What We Do Focuses More on Instructional Practice"

Preliminary cross-case analysis in our larger nGSE study indicates that the nGSE

phenomenon reflects the "practice turn" (Reid, 2011) in teacher education—a movement

that emerged in the face of mounting claims about the inability of "traditional" university models to produce effective teachers because of the perceived gap between theory and practice. Practice-based teacher education seeks to address the "problem of enactment" (Kennedy, 1999) and is based on the notion that a clinically-based curriculum focused on teacher candidates' learning of teaching practice is central to professional preparation (e.g., Ball & Cohen, 1999; Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, 2011; Lampert et al., 2013). Some of the most influential research on practice-based teacher preparation focuses on creating new contexts for teacher candidates to learn the "core" or "high-leverage" practices teachers must enact to create effective learning environments for students (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Lampert et al., 2013).

While the growing movement towards practice-based teacher education has been well-publicized (e.g., Sawchuk, 2013, 2015) and well-funded (TeachingWorks, 2019), it has also been contested. For example, Zeichner (2012) raises concerns that the prioritization of "core" or "high-leverage" practices in teacher preparation could result in insufficient attention to "the historical, social, economic, cultural, and political issues that professional teachers need to understand in relation to their practice and the practice of schooling" (p. 380). While, as mentioned earlier, Philip et al. (2019) raise concerns about how the increasing prevalence of core practices in teacher preparation simplifies understandings of justice and context. In particular, Philip et al. (2019) posit that the prescriptiveness promoted by some advocates of core practices "reflects an underlying assumption that the teacher educator knows the correct way of teaching, regardless of contextual particularities" (p. 257).

Despite such contestation in the discourse, I suggest that, similar to the proponents of practice-based teacher education, TEACH-NOW conceptualized practice as a core element of professional preparation. Thus, the institution worked from a *practice-focus* by integrating "field experiences and clinical experiences" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 15) across its preparation program's eight modules. The *Catalog and Candidate Handbook* offered a detailed overview of exactly how the institution created opportunities for practice in the field:

> The field experiences and clinical experiences of the TEACH-NOW program are embedded in activities across the modules. Early clinical experiences include classroom observations, interviews of teachers and other school professionals, and practice of teaching skills. These experiences—along with reflections—provide candidates invaluable practical knowledge of content and instructional methods. Clinical practice is the culminating experience of the TEACH-NOW program that requires candidates to teach in their own or a mentor's classroom while participating in Module 8. (p. 15)

Yet, while many conceptualizations of practice-based teacher education are centered on core practices in content area preparation (e.g., Lampert et al., 2013; McDonald et al., 2014; Santagata & Yeh, 2014), TEACH-NOW's universal stance on the nature of teaching resulted in a practice-focused approach that was attuned to a generalized understanding of effective teaching. Specifically, with its commitment to enabling "'live' teaching experiences" and ensuring "acquisition of effective teaching competencies" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 1) and consistent with proponents of practice-based teacher education, TEACH-NOW reflected an assumption that clinical practice was

essential to professional preparation in all content areas and grade levels because it readied teacher candidates for the real life of the classroom.

The importance that the institution placed on clinical experience and practice was illustrated in its internal and program documents. For example, citing the international report *Innovative Teaching and Learning Research: 2011 Findings and Implications* (Shear, Gallagher, & Patel, 2011), an internal document stated, "'Learn by doing' is a tested adage when it comes to teacher training. Hence, clinical experiences become an equally important component in [TEACH-NOW's] learning design" (*Quality Assurance Plan*, p. 4). That same document also emphasized TEACH-NOW's concern with candidates' enactment of their teaching practice and connected that enactment to the program's activity-based approach and use of the InTASC standards:

> With a focus on project-based activities, we are most interested in a candidate's ability to apply their knowledge and skills in the classroom. We have selected activities that will provide data on candidates' development of essential knowledge and skills related to the InTASC standards. (*Quality Assurance Plan,* p. 12).

Thus, connected to the "learn by doing" philosophy that guided the institution's activity-based assessment strategy and once again reflecting the sense of immediacy implied by its very name, TEACH-NOW positioned clinical experiences and "practical application" (*Curriculum Development Manual*, p. 4) as essential sources of knowledge for developing teachers.

It is important to note here that TEACH-NOW instructors acknowledged that the program's focus on practice sometimes created logistical challenges for teacher

candidates who were not already working in schools. Touching upon the self-managed nature of the candidate experience introduced earlier, one instructor explained, "These guys in TEACH-NOW, they have to figure it out. I mean, I don't know how the heck to get someone to observe a class in Tokyo. So, it's pretty cool that they are able to do this" (Interview #3, Instructor). Along similar lines, another instructor noted how early field experiences could be problematic:

> They need to have an experience, a hands-on experience with some of the skills that they're learning…It's just that we could ask the candidates to do that, those types of experiences, but if they don't have access to a classroom, then it becomes a problem. (Interview #9, Instructor)

That same instructor went on to explain how candidates overcome such challenges:

> Some of the activities, they ask them to teach a lesson. Well, if you don't have access to a classroom, you can't really teach that lesson to students, so they use their kids, or they use their neighbor or family members, but they still get the concept of teaching. It's just not in a classroom setting, so when they get to clinical, they've had some experience with teaching. It's just not in that setting, which can sometimes be overwhelming the first couple of weeks, but having that strong mentor teacher helps tremendously. (Interview #9, Instructor)

Embedded in the instructor's explanation is also an acknowledgment of candidates' sense of being overwhelmed discussed in Chapter Four and a mention of one key aspect of the program that helped to address that overwhelmed feeling—mentors.

Mentors were a central component of TEACH-NOW's practice-focus. In fact, even if candidates taught in their own classrooms for their clinical experience, the

institution still required them to have mentors. While mentor teachers are a common feature in "traditional" teacher preparation programs, TEACH-NOW's approach to the mentor teacher role was impacted by the geographic diversity of its candidate population. In order to help candidates locate schools for their clinical practice and identify mentors, TEACH-NOW employed a "clinical staff" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 15) who assisted candidates in finding appropriate placements near candidates' particular locales. TEACH-NOW allowed in-service teachers who were unable to identify a cooperating mentor in their schools to work with a "virtual mentor" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 15). Further reflecting TEACH-NOW's understanding of e-learning as what Garrison (2017) describes as "transformational in how we think about educational experiences in terms of sustained communication and collaboration" (p. 1), virtual mentors were TEACH-NOW instructors who were trained to observe and evaluate candidate performance using technologies such as videoconferencing and digital recordings. According to TEACH-NOW, during candidates' clinical component, the institution "depend[ed] on school mentors, Virtual Mentors, and instructors to guide candidates through a process that will prepare them for the work of teaching or help them improve their skills as teachers if they are already teaching" (*Mentor Handbook*, p. 7).

The idea that candidates who were already teachers of record could "improve their skills as teachers" during their clinical experience gets at the "practical application" aspect of TEACH-NOW's focus on practice. An internal document explained the purpose of that emphasis and connected it to the program's activity-based assessment strategy (PowerPoint Overview, Slide 10). Under the heading "Practical," it stated: "[TEACH-NOW] doesn't use tests or papers for assessment. Instead, assignments are designed to be

immediately useful with students or in candidates' professional development"

(PowerPoint Overview, Slide 10). One TEACH-NOW instructor discussed how this

approach differed from those of more "traditional" programs:

> They're doing projects and learning different skillsets they can apply immediately.
>
> If you're in a more traditional program like what I did when I was an undergrad at
>
> [a four-year university], you get to the end because you're going to class, you're
>
> doing projects, but you're not doing as much collaboration per se. You're not,
>
> "Okay, I'm learning about project-based learning and then this week I have to go
>
> actually apply it" (Interview #9, Instructor).

The experience of a program graduate, who was already a teacher when completing

TEACH-NOW, helps to demonstrate how TEACH-NOW candidates could "go actually

apply" what they were learning:

> I saw what I was doing was actually working better for my students. It would
>
> have been one thing to just be doing TEACH-NOW and then working at a coffee
>
> shop. I don't think I would have really been able to appreciate what I was learning
>
> as much as the fact that I was planning the lesson that I was going to be using in
>
> class the next day, and then critiquing my own lesson plan, and having my co-
>
> workers critique it, or my cohort members. (Interview #1, Graduate)

The graduate's acknowledgment of how it was beneficial to be working in a classroom

during TEACH-NOW—and not at a coffee shop—connects to the challenges for teacher

candidates who were not already working in schools mentioned above and is an issue I

discuss later in this chapter.

> Despite possible challenges for some candidates, I found that TEACH-NOW

instructors and administrators shared an understanding of the purpose and utility of that emphasis on practical application. For example, one instructor linked the focus on instruction to the universality of the curriculum:

> In my opinion, what we do focuses more on…instructional practice and the pedagogy. I'm thinking about all the different modules we offer. It's not content-based. Like I know we don't have a social studies class or an ELL class, but when you go through the different modules, you'll learn instructional strategies to help you take your knowledge of science and be able to unpack it, decompose it, and make sure that your students are able to learn. (Interview #5, Instructor)

Along similar lines, an administrator pointed to the focus on pedagogy and touched upon TEACH-NOW's assumption about content knowledge: "I think that the licensure programs in TEACH-NOW are focused on pedagogy and assume that people are coming with the content knowledge that they need to teach" (Interview #12, Administrator).

How did that assumption about candidates' content knowledge impact candidates' understandings of learning to teach? What exactly did that focus on practice and pedagogy look like? While I take up the content knowledge aspect later in the chapter, in the next section, I present my analysis of TEACH-NOW's curriculum and show how the institution's practice-focus and reliance on the InTASC standards resulted in an emphasis on effective teaching practices that the institution understood to be universally applicable.

Effective Teaching Practices: "They Have a Foundation"

In talking about the preparation candidates experienced prior to their culminating 12-week clinical component, one TEACH-NOW instructor explained:

Before they come [to the clinical component], they have already talked about

classical learning environments, they've already talked about classroom

management, they've talked about lesson planning, about assessments, and so they

have a foundation for what is to be put into place. They've talked about project-

based learning, now they're going to put a project into place in their classroom.

They've talked about creating a positive learning environment, now they're going

to actually be able to create this family atmosphere. (Interview #8, Instructor)

This instructor's overview reflects TEACH-NOW's assumption that effective teaching

practices are cross-disciplinary and cross-context. Consistent with InTASC standards and

echoing notions in the practice-based movement in teacher preparation, my analysis

indicates that TEACH-NOW enacted its universal stance with an emphasis on the

following five practices: 1) planning; 2) assessment; 3) differentiation; 4) classroom

management; 5) use of technology. While TEACH-NOW's view of effective instruction

was not limited to the five practices listed here, these five emerged as central to what

TEACH-NOW described as "the content and processes that ensure acquisition of

effective teaching competencies" (Brief Historical Overview, p. 1).

It is helpful to frame TEACH-NOW's enactment of the five practices listed above

around one of those practices—planning. Reflecting its universal stance on the nature of

teaching, TEACH-NOW aimed to ready its candidates to: "[Plan] instruction that

supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of

content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge

of students and the community context" (TEACH-NOW Clinical Rubric, p. 8). Aligned

with InTASC Standard #7 "Planning for Instruction" (CCSSO, 2011), the importance of

planning and preparation was made clear across the program's curriculum and helped ready candidates to incorporate into their teaching the four other key practices listed above. Early on in the sequence of activities, candidates were asked to consider and plan for students with special needs (Module 2, Unit 3), for learning in the 21st century (Module 3, Unit 2), and for managing student behavior and the learning environment (Module 4, Units 5 & 6).

That implicit integration of the necessity of strategic preparation led to an explicit focus on planning in Module 6, "Planning and Preparation for Learning." That module included specific, scaffolded activities intended to help candidates develop planning skills. In particular, the module focused "on the processes involved in planning and preparing comprehensive and detailed unit and lesson plans that are based on the state and national standards and include formative and summative assessments, a variety of appropriate and effective teacher strategies for diverse learners, and technology" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 12). After beginning with a big picture perspective by having candidates consider and unpack standards, the activities in the module then progressed to more specific planning practices and moved from unit planning to lesson planning to evaluating lessons designed for particular types of learners. For example, one early activity in Module 6 introduced candidates to the concept of backwards mapping and design by drawing on the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2005) and referring candidates to related videos on YouTube and other websites. Candidates were required to design a curriculum map consisting of three sequential units to be taught over a 12-week period (Module 6, Unit 1, Activity 1) and were encouraged to create a map that could be used during their upcoming clinical component. Then, in later Module 6 activities,

candidates built upon their backwards mapping work by writing unit plans (Module 6, Unit 2, Activity 2) and lesson plans (Module 6, Unit 3, Activity 1) using TEACH-NOW templates.

In terms of assessment, throughout the content of the teacher certification program, teacher candidates were encouraged to think about how to evaluate and develop student understanding. Consistent with InTASC Standard #6 "Assessment" (CCSSO, 2011), TEACH-NOW posited: "In order to be an effective educator, a teacher must frequently check for understanding" (Module 5, Unit 1, Activity 1, para. 1). That statement came in the first activity of Module 5, "Student Assessments," and underscored the importance TEACH-NOW placed on multiple methods of assessment. Formative assessments were included on the TEACH-NOW Lesson Plan Template as well on the TEACH-NOW Unit Plan Template, which prompted candidates to consider the following: "How will you monitor and track student progress?" (p. 1). The TEACH-NOW Clinical Rubric echoed that idea of monitoring student progress and evaluated candidates based on the following standard: "The candidate understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage students in their own growth, to monitor student progress, and to guide the candidate's and student's decision making." (p. 7).

In addition, reflecting its own "learn by doing" activities-based approach, performance assessments were among the multiple types of formative and summative evaluations TEACH-NOW promoted. In particular, the institution encouraged candidates to use project-based learning (PBL), which it described as a "holistic instructional strategy that brings students as close to real world applications as possible in an educational context. It requires learners to use 21st century skills at discrete points and

for specific processes and procedures of the activity" (Module 3, Unit 3, Activity 1, para. 1). PBL was introduced in Module 3 and returned to in Modules 5 and 8. For example, in a Module 5 activity, candidates considered how to assess student performance in PBL and were required to create project evaluation rubrics and feedback plans for a PBL unit they had taught or were considering teaching (Module 5, Unit 2, Activity 1). Then, in Module 8, the clinical module, candidates implemented a cross-curricular or theme-based PBL unit and, in accordance to InTASC Standards #4 and #5, were required to show evidence of their knowledge and application of their specific content areas (Module 8, Unit 5, Activity 1).

Across all forms of assessment, TEACH-NOW also encouraged candidates to use assessment data to inform their instruction. For example, one Module 5 activity had candidates analyze sample assessment data in order to "decide who needs remediation or acceleration, decide how to differentiate instruction, and form instruction groups of students" (Module 5, Unit 3, Activity 1). The focus on using data to assess students' needs connected to another one of the five effective instructional practices I found emphasized across the program's content—differentiation. In line with the institution's view that all teachers should be able to help *all* students learn in *any* learning environment and consistent with InTASC Standard #1 "Learning Development" and Standard #2 "Learning Differences" (CCSSO, 2011), differentiated instruction emerged as a crucial feature in TEACH-NOW's vision of good teaching. Connected to an additional emphasis on student-centered learning (Module 3, Unit 2, Activity 2) and teacher as "coach, leader, and facilitator of learning" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 9), TEACH-NOW promoted differentiated instruction as essential to a candidate's

ability to provide equitable learning experiences to all students. That understanding of differentiation as a means of equity was underscored by a TEACH-NOW administrator:

> We say, you personalize education for every student, essentially. No matter where that student is, and you define the goals where that student needs to go, and you build their learning back. I think that automatically takes care of equity because you're making sure that every single student learns. It doesn't matter whether this student has got special needs, or whether this student is an ESL learner, or whether this student learns differently. We do make our candidates aware of all the possibilities in terms of what are the kinds of special needs or disabilities that they could find in students in the classroom. (Interview #13, Administrator)

The notion that by taking a student-centered approach and differentiating accordingly allows a teacher to meet the needs of "every single student" reflects TEACH-NOW's universal stance. In other words, I found that TEACH-NOW posited that a good teacher has the instructional knowledge and skills to accommodate all types of learners in all types of school and socioeconomic contexts.

A TEACH-NOW virtual mentor, who was also an instructor in the program, further highlighted the institution's shared understanding about the importance of differentiation as a way to meet the needs of individual students:

> Differentiation is something that we focus a lot on in making sure that our candidates are able to and understand the value and importance of meeting the students where they are in that everybody has expectations, but their expectations don't have to be the same. (Interview #23, Mentor)

In order to foster candidates' learning as it related to differentiating instruction and their creating of "learning experiences that enable each student to achieve success" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 9), TEACH-NOW ensured that candidates understood *why* differentiation was important early on in the program.

Specifically, before explicitly introducing the concept of differentiated instruction, in Module 2, "The Culture of Schooling," TEACH-NOW had candidates consider issues related to student diversity and students with special needs by requiring them to do the following:

- Read laws and policies that impact teaching such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and create a 5-minute video that examined a "law or policy that affects the day-to-day functioning of schools, students, and teachers in the country in which you are living or in your home country" (Module 2, Unit 1, Activity 1, para. 3).

- Research education statistics about their local school or school district, state, and/or country using resources like the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) or the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and create a spreadsheet and infographic with their findings (Module 2, Unit 2, Activity 1).

After having candidates examine the laws and demographics of their particular school and country contexts—a notably broad and demanding task—the next activity in Module 2 turned directly to the idea of differentiation. The introduction to that activity framed differentiation in the following way:

In today's world, diversity in classrooms is a norm rather than an exception. As a result, teachers need to differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students based on their gender, ethnic, and racial background, socioeconomic status, native language, talents, and disabilities. In this activity you will explore these groups and teaching strategies that will help you differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse students in a classroom. (Module 2, Unit 2, Activity 2, para. 1)

To familiarize candidates with "teaching strategies" that would help them know how to differentiate based on their students' demographics, TEACH-NOW required them to study resources from the education-focused philanthropic foundation Edutopia, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the diversity-focused non-profit Teaching Tolerance, among others. Candidates then worked with partners to create and share presentations on "how you can address and integrate the diversity of your students into your instruction" (Module 2, Unit 2, Activity 2, para. 3). Two activities later, TEACH-NOW addressed teaching strategies that would help candidates know how to differentiate based on their students' learning needs by having them interview regular and special education teachers about their practices. Candidates then contributed to a discussion forum dedicated to differentiated instruction and posted "strategies that you have researched or discussed with your interviewees" (Module 2, Unit 3, Activity 2).

Once the purpose of differentiated instruction was introduced in Module 2, I found that TEACH-NOW threaded the concept throughout the rest of the content of the preparation program. For example, the TEACH-NOW Lesson Plan Template explicitly

addressed it by calling for a list of ways in which issues of student diversity would be addressed through differentiation. It was also clearly emphasized in the TEACH-NOW Unit Plan Template, which asked candidates to consider the following: "How will you differentiate the product, content, and/or process for the various needs, preferences and readiness levels of your students? How will you differentiate the lesson for students with disabilities and English language learners?" (p. 2). Additionally, differentiation was highlighted during synchronous virtual class sessions. In one virtual class it was mentioned in connection to teaching students with learning disabilities (Observation #3, Module 2), in another it came up in relation to a candidate discussion of pre-assessment and assessment design (Observation #6, Module 5), and in yet another it was underscored in connection to lesson planning (Observation #7, Module 6).

TEACH-NOW's focus on differentiation as an effective teaching practice connected to its focus on classroom management. According to the same virtual mentor quoted earlier, "Classroom management, we do spend time on that as well...if you don't have classroom management, you're not doing anything" (Interview #23, Mentor). Thus, consistent with InTASC Standard #3 "Learning Environments," TEACH-NOW promoted the benefits of a "well-organized classroom," (TEACH-NOW Clinical Rubric, p. 4) in which the teacher maximizes time on task and uses the classroom space in a logical manner.

To develop those skills in candidates, TEACH-NOW dedicated an entire six-week module to "Managing the Learning Environment" (i.e., Module 4) and provided candidates classroom management resources (e.g., articles, websites, YouTube videos) that drew upon well-known instructional strategies from Marzano (2017), Jones (2000),

Lemov (2010), among others. An examination of the activities that comprised the content of Module 4 indicate that TEACH-NOW encouraged candidates to create a "climate of caring and concern" (Module 4, Unit 1, Activity 1, para. 2) that centered on the establishing of "norms, procedures, transitions, and high expectations" (Module 4, Unit 2, Activity 1, para. 2). Also included in TEACH-NOW's understanding of classroom management was an emphasis on constructive feedback (Module 4, Unit 3, Activity 1), growth mindsets (Module 4, Unit 4, Activity 1), and using technology for student behavior management (Module 4, Unit 5, Activity 1).

Given its practice-focus, TEACH-NOW expected candidates to enact their understanding of differentiation and classroom management during both their early field experiences and culminating clinical experiences. For example, one early field experience required candidates to interview teachers or administrators in their school about students with disabilities and then consider how differentiated instruction could be used to assists those students (Module 2, Unit 3, Activity 2). Later in the program, candidates were required to demonstrate their meeting of the first three InTASC standards, which center on "The Learner and Learning," by showing that they understood "individual differences and diverse cultures and communities" and could "create inclusive learning environments in their classrooms" (Module 8, Unit 3, Activity 1, para. 2). To do that, candidates had to plan a lesson using the TEACH-NOW Lesson Plan Template and then record, edit, and annotate a video of themselves teaching that lesson. Candidates then had to write a comprehensive reflection about how they demonstrated the standards in the video.

It is worth noting here that TEACH-NOW frequently required candidates to watch, reflect upon, and provide feedback on recorded videos of themselves as well as

other members of their collaborative candidate cohort engaged in teaching. Not only did that specific teacher education pedagogy support TEACH-NOW's practice-focused approach and help to enhance candidates' understanding of the institution's vision of good teaching, but it also connected to Garrison's (2017) assertion that technology can be used to facilitate the "cognitive presence" of an e-learning experience. By having candidates record, share, and analyze videos of their clinical experiences, TEACH-NOW reflected Garrison's (2017) notion that technology can be used to "precipitate and support purposeful discourse and reflection" (p. 135). Although TEACH-NOW's candidates completed the program from locations around the world, the "global reach of connectivity" (Turkle, 2017, p. 152) enabled them to engage in a collaborative and reflective learning community that transcended time and distance.

The utilization of video and technology to capture and explore candidates' enactment of effective teaching practices in the field connects to the fifth strategy TEACH-NOW emphasized—the use of technology in the P-12 classroom. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, technology was central to the conceptualization of TEACH-NOW's approach to teacher preparation and made possible the program's e-learning platform and utilization of synchronous virtual classes. TEACH-NOW positioned its use of technology as a way in which candidates would "learn in the way [they] plan to teach" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1). Thus, in clear alignment with its aim to prepare "proficient 21st century teachers" (*Quality Assurance Plan*, p. 5), a number of curricular components reflected TEACH-NOW's assumption that the well-designed and thoughtful incorporation of technology was central to an effective teaching practice.

Garrison (2017) would agree with TEACH-NOW's assumption. He argues that teachers thoughtfully incorporating technology into their practice is increasingly necessary:

As we enter the age of technological adolescence in the field of education, educators are becoming more aware and responsible in applying technology with greater purpose. While technological advances will continue, providing educators with more (and less expensive) communication choices will see substantive educational improvements. This will certainly be the case educationally as we come to accept the need for change in how we design and deliver learning experiences that correspond to the needs of a connected knowledge society. (p. 156)

In valuing the responsibility of educators to apply technology with "greater purpose," TEACH-NOW also echoed CCSSO's (2011) view that the "development of technology-enriched learning environments can enable learners to pursue their individual curiosities and become active participants in setting their own educational goals, managing their own learning, and assessing their own progress" (p. 22).

The thoughts of an instructor helped to emphasize how the institution integrated the use of technology into the content of its program. In response to an interview question about the role of technology in teacher preparation and teaching at-large, the instructor explained:

Oh, it's very important. It's one of those teaching in the 21st century strategies that we discuss that strategy in every module…I teach mainly [Modules] 7 and 8, which is clinical. Within the standards, that's one of the questions, "How did you

use technology this week in your classroom, in your lesson?" That's something we push from the very beginning starting with Module 1. (Interview #9, Instructor)

Program documents support the assertion of that instructor that TEACH-NOW "pushed" technology starting with Module 1. Specifically, I found that TEACH-NOW taught candidates to use technology in their own P-12 classrooms through its "learn by doing" approach. After introducing key digital tools and networking platforms in Module 1 (e.g., Zoom, WhatsApp, Trello, Google applications, Twitter), the institution required candidates to use a wide variety of web tools and mobile applications throughout the program's activities. As was explained in the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, "Candidate's use and become familiar with technology is this essential in the modern classroom with students who are increasingly digital natives" (p. 4). The report requirements of the activities included in Table 5 (see Chapter Four, pp. 137-138) help to illustrate this and reflect the required use of tools such as digital videos, VoiceThread, and Google Docs.

I found that TEACH-NOW's approach to lesson planning was representative of its position that the use of technology was essential to good teaching in the digital age. Among other requirements, the program's lesson plan writing activity prompted candidates to do the following:

Develop high impact teaching strategies and activities you will use to help them achieve the [lesson] objective as well as utilize 21st century skills. Think about how you will use technology in the lesson to help you increase productivity and create enhanced or deeper student learning. (Include tech ideas even if you may

have limited resources at the school during implementation). (Module 6, Unit 3,

Activity 1, para. 10)

The idea that technology could help the candidate "increase productivity and create enhanced or deeper student learning" was a consistent theme across TEACH-NOW's program content. Other examples of how TEACH-NOW stressed the relationship of technology to effective teaching included asking candidates to consider the use of assistive technologies for students with disabilities (Module 2, Unit 3, Activity 3) and the advantages of technology-enhanced instruction (Module 3, Unit 1, Activity 3). In addition, the successful use of technology and digital tools was also underscored in virtual classes. For example, in an observation of one virtual class, there was a discussion about how to thoughtfully incorporate technology into lessons (Observation #3, Module 2), and in another, there was a discussion about the use of mobile devices in the classroom (Observation #4, Module 3).

It is important to note that while TEACH-NOW promoted the use of technology as a means for teachers and teacher candidates to increase classroom productivity and create deeper student learning, Turkle (2015, 2017) cautions against an overreliance on digital tools. In particular, Turkle (2015) argues that pressure to use technology in the classroom in order to engage students in discourse can sometimes lead to disengagement and even distraction. According to Turkle (2015):

We want technology put in the service of our educational purposes. But this can happen only if we are clear about them. If not, we may be tolerant of classroom technologies that distract teachers and students from focusing on each other. (p. 243)

By having candidates consider their use of technology during the planning of lessons, TEACH-NOW faculty appeared to understand that the successful integration of technology requires preparation and purpose.

By designing its curricular content based on a universal stance on the nature of teaching and employing the activities-based assessment strategy detailed in Chapter Four, TEACH-NOW had specific learning outcomes for its teacher candidates. According to the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook,* candidates who completed the TEACH-NOW's certification program would be able to:

- Diagnose students' learning capacities

- Design learning experiences that enable each student to achieve success

- Use new research on learners and learning to create innovative and effective teaching methods

- Recognize the changing role of a teacher from dispenser of knowledge to manager, coach, leader, and facilitator of learning

- Select and use next-generation tools and technology for teaching and learning

- Use an active, collaborative learning model in the classroom

- Manage the challenges of the environment in which formal education occurs (p. 9)

When combined, these learning outcomes reflect TEACH-NOW's universal stance on the nature of teaching and its assumption that effective teaching strategies are applicable to *any* learning environment. By including known markers of credibility within its program content, TEACH-NOW sought to demonstrate to teacher candidates and the broader field of teacher education that an online, for-profit "game-changer" could be legitimate. In

doing so, the institution also furthered its coherent and mission-driven aim "to equip, enable, and empower teachers to diagnose any learning environment and ensure that every student learns, develops, and grows" (Program Descriptions, p. 2). Yet, that was not the only way in which TEACH-NOW worked to signal its legitimacy. In the next section, I show that TEACH-NOW understood that in order to strengthen its reputation as a quality teacher preparation provider, markers of credibility needed to extend to the operation of the institution itself.

<center>**Institutional Conduct: "Our Program Operates Professionally"**</center>

In this chapter and the last, I have argued that the innovation/legitimacy "push and pull" dynamic that drove TEACH-NOW influenced its approach to teacher preparation in multiple ways (see Figure 3 on p. 97). With this section, I analyze the final key area impacted by that "push and pull"—institutional conduct. I show that TEACH-NOW established legitimacy by achieving recognized markers of credibility in its institutional operations. To do that, I discuss the significance of TEACH-NOW's accreditation, faculty, and partners and affiliations.

Accreditation: "To be Recognized as Equivalent to a Traditional Program"

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), an accreditation advocacy organization (2019), "'Accreditation' is review of the quality of higher education institutions and programs. In the United States, accreditation is a major way that students, families, government officials, and the press know that an institution or program provides a quality education" (CHEA, n.d.). The notion that accreditation is a marker for students of "a quality education" is consistent with the reasoning behind

TEACH-NOW's pursuit of accreditation. The thoughts of one administrator illustrated that reasoning:

> Our candidates, you know, had questions about our accreditation. Even though we could pretty much guarantee them that we could license them through reciprocity, they wanted our program to be able to exemplify and through national accreditation, that we were operating well. Basically, we took the bull by the horns and we did that because that was something that our students wanted, that's something that we wanted…people around the world to know. That our program operates professionally. (Interview #15, Administrator)

To indicate to "people around the world" that TEACH-NOW "operates professionally," the institution pursued and was granted accreditation by two major accreditation bodies.

As an online graduate school of education, TEACH-NOW earned accreditation from the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). DEAC, which is recognized by both the USDOE and CHEA, and is "an institutional accrediting organization for postsecondary distance education institutions that offer programs primarily by the distance education method from the non-degree level up to and including the professional doctoral degree" (DEAC, 2019, para. 2). As a teacher preparation provider, TEACH-NOW also earned accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the major professional or programmatic accreditor for teacher education in the US, which is recognized by CHEA, and aims to "advanc[e] equity and excellence in educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student

learning" (CAEP, 2015a, para. 2). TEACH-NOW was accredited by DEAC in January 2017 and by CAEP in April of that same year (TEACH-NOW History).

One former TEACH-NOW administrator offered further insight into TEACH-NOW's approach to accreditation and the significance the institution placed on the process. In doing so, that administrator suggested that TEACH-NOW wanted to be efficient in its pursuit of accreditation and thus chose not to go for accreditation from the traditional regional accrediting body, Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), which accredits higher education institutions in Washington, D.C. and the middle states area:

> I think primarily, it was to be recognized as equivalent to a traditional program. We could have gone for regional accreditation, but actually it takes longer. You have to be in the process for a number of years and [the founder/CEO] was trying to get this very early, just a couple years after we had started, which is kind of amazing to do it that fast. DEAC provided one way of doing it. Since we were all online, that did make sense. That's how Western Governors had started with DEAC before it went for regional. So that made sense. Then, of course, having the teacher ed. certification." (Interview #29, Former Administrator)

In emphasizing the desire to be viewed "as equivalent to a traditional program," the perspective of the former administrator quoted above reflected a deliberate response by TEACH-NOW to concerns in the discourse about the quality of fully online programs and institutions. By working to achieve DEAC accreditation, TEACH-NOW took the position that for-profit, online learning experiences can and should be held to standards of quality.

That position aligns with Garrison's (2017) view that, when it comes to e-learning, certain institutions of higher education are moving beyond the "public relations rhetoric associated with being innovative" (p. 141). According to Garrison, "These forward looking institutions are redefining their conceptions of what constitutes a quality learning experience in the context of ubiquitous, mediated communications environments" (p. 141). I suggest that by becoming a DEAC accredited institution, TEACH-NOW sought to demonstrate that it offered a "quality learning experience" within a technology-centric environment. Yet, because TEACH-NOW was a teacher preparation provider, it also sought CAEP accreditation to demonstrate that it offered a quality *learning to teach experience* within a technology-centric environment.

A TEACH-NOW administrator underscored the positive perception that comes with CAEP accreditation, especially for an online graduate school of education:

> [T]his is the first time that I've ever really worked with online learning. I wouldn't have done it if I didn't think that this was a quality program. I mean, they're CAEP accredited, they've gone through all of that. I think that there is a lot of rigor in the program. (Interview #12, Administrator)

Along similar lines and reflecting the significance of CAEP accreditation in the eyes of teacher education professionals, another administrator drew a connection to the importance of meeting standards:

> We started having students question whether we had accreditation before we got it. The only thing we could say was, "We're working on it. We hope to have it by such and such." I think students and their parents were very interested. Because to them, that indicates that you're meeting standards. You're not just a fly-by-night

institution. I think it was very important to them. Then, of course, to professional

colleagues, to say to them, this might have started as an alternate-route program.

[The founder/CEO] came out of that tradition. But we are able to meet national

standards as well. It was proving that doing something different could also be

effective and recognized. (Interview #29, Former Administrator)

As the first and, as of May 2019 the only, online teacher preparation program to have

CAEP accreditation (TEACH-NOW, 2019), TEACH-NOW achieved that goal of proving

to outsiders that it was, in fact, "effective and recognized."

It is important to note that CAEP is not without its critics. Although its architects

and advocates praise CAEP for improving the "performance of candidates as

practitioners in the nation's P-12 schools" (CAEP, 2015c, para. 1) and increasing the

"stature" (CAEP, 2015c, para. 1) of the entire teaching profession, others have raised

concerns about the accreditor and its approach. Among those are concerns about CAEP's

process and cost (American Association for Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE],

2015), the content and rigor of its standards (Sawchuk, 2016), and the evidence-base

undergirding its approach (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016, 2018). Furthermore, Cochran-

Smith, Carney et al. (2018a) suggest CAEP reflects a data-based accountability system

rooted in neoliberal logic and problematic assumptions about diversity and equity.

Despite the ongoing critique of CAEP in the discourse, however, I found that TEACH-

NOW believed the benefits of attaining CAEP accreditation outweighed any drawbacks.

Specifically, the institution understood that CAEP accreditation signifies an external

validation of program quality attained through rigorous program evaluation led by peers

from within the field of teacher education.

Not only did earning two forms of accreditation reduce candidate concern and apprehension about the legitimacy of TEACH-NOW, administrators and instructors alike noted that the accreditation process helped the institution to improve the quality of its offerings. As one TEACH-NOW instructor explained:

> I think that it gives the program a certain cachet that other programs do not have. I mean, getting those two accreditations was not an easy process and so any of us that are on staff know that it was not an easy process… It was very intensive, but it helped us to know where we needed to improve what we were doing. (Interview #26, Instructor)

The achievement of such "cachet" was important for TEACH-NOW. It operated in an education landscape where trepidations exist about the use of technology and e-learning in higher education (Garrison, 2017, Turkle, 2015). Further, as an online, for-profit graduate school, TEACH-NOW wanted to prove that it offered "a high standard of educational quality" (DEAC, 2019, para. 3) by meeting DEAC's accreditation standards. Furthermore, in a *teacher education* landscape in which there are worries about whether fully online programs can prepare teachers as well as "traditional" programs (Chiero & Beare, 2010; Daves & Roberts, 2010; Heafner & Petty, 2016; Peterson & Bond, 2004; Stricklin & Tingle, 2016), TEACH-NOW wanted to prove it met CAEP's standards and prepared "competent and caring educators" (CAEP, 2015c, para. 3). Combined, its earning of DEAC and CAEP accreditation indicated that TEACH-NOW met the accreditors' standards and thus helped to balance consumer concerns connected to the institution's innovative aspects.

Faculty: "Master Educators with Many Years' Experience"

As mentioned in Chapter Two, a central aspect of Garrison's (2017) e-learning framework is the "teaching presence" (p. 26). According to Garrison, "As a result of the complexities associated with online and blended learning environments, teaching presence provides the essential unifying element to achieve intended learning outcomes in virtual and collaborative settings" (p. 70). In order to help create that "unifying element," Garrison (2017) argues that those teaching in e-learning environments must "understand how information and communication technologies can be used in the service of a worthwhile educational experience" (p. 152).

My analysis suggests that TEACH-NOW understood the importance of the teaching presence in its teacher preparation program. To help ensure it provided candidates a credible and "worthwhile" experience, TEACH-NOW hired instructors who were "committed to [TEACH-NOW's] mission and [to] preparing teachers to help p-12 students learn at high levels" (*Faculty Handbook*, p. 6). I suggest that by hiring instructors committed to its mission, TEACH-NOW not only sustained coherent understandings about the institution's approach to teacher preparation but also strengthened the legitimacy of its offerings. According to TEACH-NOW's *Faculty Handbook*, the institution had specific hiring requirements for its "high-quality and qualified faculty members" (p. 16):

- A minimum of three (3) years of experience as an exemplary teacher
- A minimum of a master's degree or exceptional expertise or experience to teach in the certificate program and a doctoral degree or exceptional expertise or experience to teach in the master's program

- A deep understanding of activity-based, collaborative learning

- A commitment to transform teaching to align with the needs of learners in a digital world

- Demonstrated evidence of producing student achievement gains

- Awards or distinctions in teaching

- Proficiency integrating multiple technologies as part of the learning process

- Experience teaching in an online/virtual learning environment (p. 16)

Connecting back to Garrison's (2017) assertions about the importance of the teaching presence in e-learning environments, three of the above requirements were technology-focused. The other five requirements addressed the teacher education-related qualifications of instructors. Reflecting the program's practice-focus, TEACH-NOW required its instructors to have at least three years of experience with the practice of teaching. Of the six instructors and two virtual mentors/instructors that I interviewed, three identified as having more than 20 years of experience in education (Interviews #3, #8, #9, Instructors), four were currently also working in P-12 settings (Interviews #5, #10, #19, #23, Mentors/Instructors), and all eight reported that they understood the importance of technology to 21st century teaching and learning.

In addition and further reflecting TEACH-NOW's commitment to "high-quality and qualified faculty members," at the time of data generation, all TEACH-NOW faculty members held or were working towards advanced degrees. Specifically, of the 42 faculty members listed in the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, a list that included both instructors and administrators, 41 had already obtained advanced degrees (e.g., MEd, MAT, MS). Seven of those advanced degrees were PhDs or EdDs. Two faculty members

were current doctoral candidates, two held JDs, and one held an EdS. The sole faculty member without an advanced degree was identified as a master's candidate. Of course, it must be noted that the education backgrounds of TEACH-NOW's faculty contrasted with "traditional" college- and university-based teacher preparation programs where the vast majority of faculty members tend to hold terminal degrees. It did align, however, with the aspects of the practice-based teacher education movement which privileges and values the classroom experience of teacher educators. In fact, TEACH-NOW's website highlighted the teaching experience of its faculty on its website and stated, "TEACH-NOW [f]aculty are master educators with many years' experience excelling in the classroom" (TEACH-NOW, 2018g, para. 1)

The idea that its teaching faculty was comprised of "master educators" helped TEACH-NOW addresses skepticism in the discourse about the quality of online teacher preparation programs. Another way in which TEACH-NOW worked to address those concerns was by ensuring its candidates that the institution's faculty and staff were dedicated to offering a supportive preparation experience. According to the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook*:

> Online education, while it removes many traditional barriers, comes with its own challenges as well. TEACH-NOW recognizes that candidates might need different forms of support to be successful in a program like ours….The instructors and staff of TEACH-NOW are ready to support candidates in the successful completion of the programs (p. 21).

One administrator elaborated upon that need for TEACH-NOW to create a supportive online institutional environment:

When people come to TEACH-NOW, they come with a preconceived notion that

it might be like another online program that they've had bad experiences with

before but what they find is that through the collaboration, through the use of

technology and being challenged that they become better at looking at education

in a broader scope. At first it seems a little daunting, it seems challenging but I

think it's the encouragement that you get from your instructors, being able to work

with them in a live classroom setting and working with your classmates in a live

classroom setting is what really drives people to, kind of, continue on and press

towards the mark. (Interview #15, Administrator)

The notion that TEACH-NOW instructors were ready to support and encourage

candidates during their online education experience is consistent with Garrison's (2017)

viewpoint that participating in an e-learning context requires adjustment. In particular,

Garrison notes, "Identifying with and engaging in an online community of learners is

unlike most traditional educational classrooms" (p. 113). Thus, institutions must

"recognize adjustment challenges and provide technology support" (p. 113).

At a higher level of abstraction, Turkle (2011) suggests that the "adjustment

challenges" we face as a result of technology produce anxiety. When compared to the

"old" way of doing things—reading, learning, communicating—technological

advancements are typically heralded as not only innovative but as better. According to

Turkle (2011), "Our habitual narratives about technology begin with respectful

disparagement of what came before and move on to idealize the new" (p. 242). With that

idealization come new experiences and with new experiences come worry. As Turkle

explains (2011), "Technology helps us manage life's stresses but generates anxieties of

its own" (p. 243). As I detailed in Chapter Four, some TEACH-NOW candidates experienced those anxieties. Yet, my analysis also indicates that the institution recognized the possibility of those "challenges" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 21) and proactively addressed them.

An experience relayed by one instructor about TEACH-NOW's decision to change its videoconferencing software platform illustrated how the institution worked to signal to its candidates that it was dedicated to assisting them as online learners:

> The first time, we switched to Zoom, and I had a VC, in Zoom, versus Adobe Connect, it was three weeks into a six-week module, where I had five Asian candidates, and when they logged in, and could see each other, I think one of them almost starting crying. Because, for the first time, she was present. She had her face, audio was clear, and it was a resurgence of their contributions. (Interview #4, Instructor)

That same instructor also expressed dedication and appreciation for being a teacher educator further demonstrating the supportive environment TEACH-NOW constructed for its candidates:

> Knowing that I am doing something to help these individuals, men and women, from all over the globe, find themselves, define themselves, empower them to be incredibly strong, and effective teachers, that love what they do? It's the best job in the world. At some point, I see most candidates get it. It's in an activity, that I read, it's a blog, it's a reflection piece, it just all comes together, and there are these very personal, powerful moments, that they have, knowing that this is such an important job. (Interview #4, Instructor)

By acknowledging the importance of the work of teacher educators and of teaching at large, the thoughts of this instructor help to show that TEACH-NOW understood the need to balance its innovative aspects by having its faculty convey a legitimate sense of trust and support to its candidates across time and distance. In other words, TEACH-NOW administrators and faculty actively worked to demonstrate to the program's candidates that even though they were being prepared through a primarily virtual learning experience, their needs and development as educators in the physical world mattered to the institution. I discuss how candidates made sense of that supportive environment later in this chapter.

Affiliations and Referrals

Another way in which TEACH-NOW, as an institution, worked to build trust and prove its legitimacy was through affiliations and referrals. In aiming to be, as one administrator described, "the premier teacher preparation program in the world" (Interview #15, Administrator), I found that TEACH-NOW understood the importance of being aligned with reputable individuals and organizations.

For example, TEACH-NOW had a four-person advisory council, which was described as being "responsible for providing guidance and counseling to the President and CEO for all academic matters" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 6). The four individuals on the council were experienced leaders in teacher education and/or online learning. In terms of teacher education, there was Robert Floden, a noted teacher education researcher and dean of the College of Education at Michigan State University, and Charlotte Danielson, a well-known author and consultant in the field of instruction and teacher evaluation. I suggest that the involvement of both Floden and Danielson in

TEACH-NOW's advisory council offered important name recognition and underscored the institution's aim to be viewed as a quality teacher preparation provider. As it related to online learning, there was Robert Steiner, director of online teacher education at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), and Robert Duncan, teacher and former STEM program director at the fully online WGU. Interestingly, AMNH is home to another nGSE, the Richard Gilder Graduate School, and, as mentioned in Chapter One, WGU is the "largest producer of STEM teachers in the U.S., conferring 11% of the nation's bachelor's and master's degrees in STEM teaching" (WGU, 2016, p. 9). Overall, by seeking guidance and counseling from experts in the fields of teacher education and online learning, TEACH-NOW understood that as an innovative online graduate school of education, aligning with experts was a marker of its credibility.

Along with the advisory council, I found that TEACH-NOW also formed professional partnerships with educational organizations to further indicate its legitimacy as a teacher preparation provider. Those partnerships were publicized on the institution's website and in its *Catalog and Candidate Handbook*. On its website, TEACH-NOW's partners were described as sharing a focus on quality teacher education: "The TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education enjoys partnerships with a variety of organizations that are all focused on providing quality teacher education to their members" (TEACH-NOW, 2018h, para.1).

Across both its website and the *Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, TEACH-NOW listed 11 partners. Among the organizations listed were international non-profits such as: The Teacher Foundation (TTF), an education development and improvement organization based in India (TTF, 2016); Educational Collaborative for International

Schools (ECIS), a global network of schools, educational organizations, and individuals based in England (ECIS, n.d.); and Quality Schools International (QSI), a system of 37 international schools in 31 countries based in Slovenia (QSI, n.d.). Also listed were for-profit teacher recruitment agencies including Search Associates, a company with offices around the world that specializes in recruiting teachers and staff for international schools (Search Associates, 2019). TEACH-NOW's partnerships with organizations such as these connected to its global candidate population and need to indicate its credibility to an international audience.

In addition to the 11 partners described above, TEACH-NOW also had a relationship with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. TEACH-NOW's "Veterans Initiative" (TEACH-NOW, 2018i, para. 1) allowed those eligible to use G.I Bill benefits to attend TEACH-NOW free of cost. Designed to address a military audience directly, the page on the TEACH-NOW website detailing the initiative stated: "Veterans aid was designed to thank you for your service and fully covers tuition. Let us help you take the next step in your new career" (TEACH-NOW, 2018i, para. 8). I suggest that TEACH-NOW's veterans program not only provided well-deserving military members the opportunity to train to become teachers but also helped to bolster TEACH-NOW's reputation. This was illustrated in a recent article in *Fast Company*, which lauded TEACH-NOW's founder and CEO as one of 2019's "Most Creative People in Business" for "turning veterans into teachers" (Meyer, 2019, para. 1).

Along with its various professional partnerships, I also found that word-of-mouth referrals were an integral component to the formation of TEACH-NOW's positive reputation as a teacher preparation provider. As the founder and CEO detailed:

It's nine and a half out of 10 people who enroll in TEACH-NOW heard about it

from somebody who went through it, or principals whose teachers went through

it, or a teacher went through. It's grown organically as they say, from

recommendations from people who actually have experienced it. (Interview #27,

Founder/CEO)

An administrator expanded upon the notion of TEACH-NOW's organic growth and

connected it to the quality of its program:

We've been producing excellent teachers and what happens is, you know, you

start off as a small program that's word-of-mouth. Sometimes that word-of-mouth

tradition continues, but people keep talking about us and more people are coming

to us because someone at their school told them, a principal at their school told

them about the TEACH-NOW program. The word is getting around, and we

haven't really invested in a lot of marketing. (Interview #15, Administrator)

Another administrator offered a perspective on why word-of-mouth publicity worked

well for TEACH-NOW and, similar to the administrator quoted above, linked it to the

credibility of the program:

I also think the word-of-mouth works because people who have gone through the

program can say to their peers, 'I went through this program and I was able to

apply what I've learned in the program the very next day in my classroom. And I

learned to be a better teacher because of it. (Interview #12, Administrator)

The two orientation sessions I observed for new teacher candidates in the program

supported this assertion and indicated that word-of-mouth recommendations resulted in

the recruitment of a large number of the teacher candidates who were present (Observations #1 & #2, Orientation).

TEACH-NOW's word-of-mouth recruitment stream was consistent with some of the research on online teacher preparation, which indicates that candidates/graduates of fully online programs feel well-prepared and are satisfied with their training (Foster et al., 2008; Lacina et al., 2011; McMahon & Dinan Thompson, 2014; Schweizer et al., 2008; Snyder, 2010). As mentioned in Chapter Four, in TEACH-NOW's 2019 survey of over 700 program graduates, 91.2% said they would recommend the program to a colleague or friend (2019 Alumni Survey). That survey also found that 92.95% of respondents felt as though they had achieved the goals they had when they started TEACH-NOW (2019 Alumni Survey). I found that that satisfaction and willingness to recommend the program served as a key marker of the program's credibility to prospective candidates. If a colleague or friend did the program, felt it was worthwhile, and recommended it, candidates deemed it legitimate. This was illustrated by the thoughts of one candidate:

I found that there was a lot that I wanted to know [about teaching], so I met a teacher who works with an American school here and said that TEACH-NOW is a great program and that I should look at it. That's how I came to TEACH-NOW. (Interview #20, Candidate)

Interestingly, however, one candidate I interviewed reported learning about TEACH-NOW not from a friend or colleague or by researching online, but from someone working at a university-based teacher education program. According to that candidate:

I went to [a university in the United States] to ask about their teacher certification, and the advisor brought me into her office and shut the door and said, "You don't

want to come here, you should do this online program that's cheaper and faster."
Because I had so much teaching experience already. It would've taken two years
and a lot of money to get another master's degree. I didn't need another master's
degree, and I agreed, so she pointed me towards TEACH-NOW, and that's what I
did. (Interview #16, Candidate)

A university-based teacher educator pointing a prospective student towards TEACH-
NOW is significant for a few reasons. First, it shows word-of-mouth referrals were not
limited to a candidate's immediate professional circle. Second, it highlights how
TEACH-NOW's innovation in terms of program cost and efficiency contrasted with
"traditional" approaches and thus made it appealing. Finally, it suggests that the
university-based teacher educator viewed TEACH-NOW as a credible alternative to her
own program in that it would better meet the needs of that particular prospective student.

As I have shown, TEACH-NOW integrated a number of deliberate and
recognized markers of credibility into its institutional operations and curricular content in
order to establish itself as "a great program" in the minds of its candidates and graduates.
In the next section, I offer an analysis of the specific ways in which the pull of legitimacy
impacted the candidate experience.

TEACH-NOW Candidates and the Pull of Legitimacy

In the sections above, I argued that TEACH-NOW worked to establish legitimacy
through the standards-based content of its teacher preparation program and through its
conduct as a professional institution. In doing so, I suggested that as a response to the
types of concerns that often arise with innovation, TEACH-NOW incorporated accepted
markers of credibility into its approach. To understand how its efforts to legitimate its

teacher preparation program impacted its teacher candidates, in this section, I discuss how the pull of legitimacy contributed to the self-managed candidate experience of learning to teach that I introduced in Chapter Four. In Chapter Four and as Figure 5 depicts, I suggested that the innovative aspects of TEACH-NOW's preparation program influenced the self-managed nature of that experience in three ways. In this section, I show how the "pull of legitimacy" also impacted candidates and shaped their experience based on two notions: 1) practice is a priority; 2) the preparation provider is a support resource. I discuss TEACH-NOW candidates' understandings of both of those notions below.
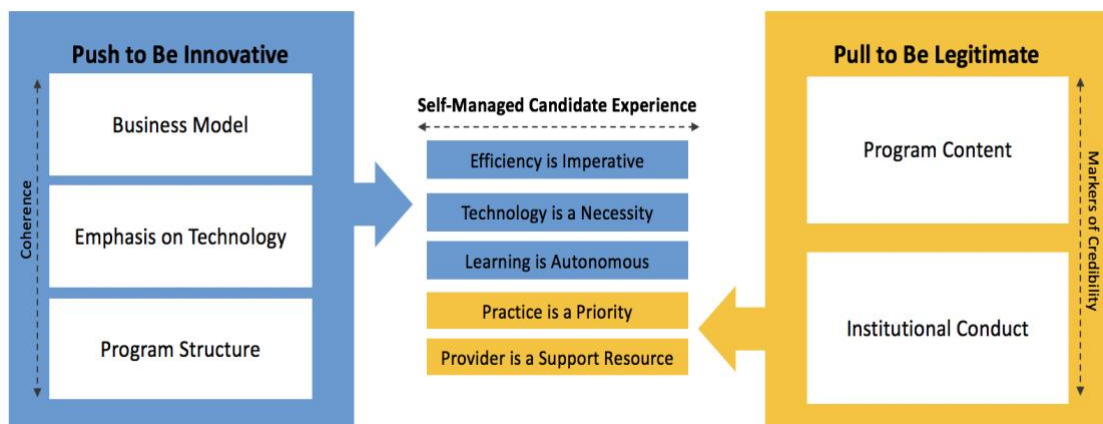
Figure 5. TEACH-NOW teacher candidates and the pull of legitimacy.

Practice is a Priority: "You Learn the Practical Sides of Teaching"

As detailed above, TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program reflected a universal stance on the nature of teaching that aimed to "prepare educators who are effective in helping *all* students learn" in "*any* learning environment" (*Catalog and Candidate Handbook*, p. 4, emphasis added). My analysis shows that that emphasis resulted in consistent views across the 10 candidates/graduates I interviewed that TEACH-NOW's prioritizing of effective teaching practices was beneficial to their

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individual development as educators. In other words, all of the candidates/graduates

reported that they learned instructional strategies that were useful to their current or

future teaching.

That shared understanding of the importance of instructional practices was

illustrated in how one candidate described TEACH-NOW to others. Contrasting TEACH-

NOW to the perceived theory-heavy approach utilized by "traditional" preparation

programs, that candidate explained:

> And when they ask me, "Okay, so how is it like? What are you learning?" And I
>
> say, "It's like a boot camp for people who want to teach because you learn the
>
> practical sides of teaching." You learn the strategies that you need to learn right
>
> before you start teaching. So it's not focused on theories, or when, you know how
>
> when you're getting a degree like half the time…you're learning theories and then
>
> the other half is the only important thing because…that's the only thing you can
>
> apply when you actually start working? But with TEACH-NOW, it's the focus on
>
> everything you actually need to use and need to do when you [are] actual[ly]
>
> teaching, or when you actually handle a class. (Interview #18, Candidate)

Another program graduate described TEACH-NOW's emphasis on "the practical sides of

teaching" more succinctly and stated, "I increased the number of tools in my teaching

toolbox" (Interview #6, Graduate).

The "tools" the candidate and graduates discussed when asked about the ways in

which TEACH-NOW prepared them as teachers aligned with the effective teaching

practices outlined earlier in this chapter and underscored the importance TEACH-NOW

placed on being prepared to teach all students. For example, one candidate explained the importance of knowing effective strategies:

> One strategy does not work for all types of teaching or for all types of concepts, so you need to learn which strategy works the most, and you should also know what strategies work best for different types of learners and different grades, so you really have to have a lot of like strategies in your bag to pull out. (Interview #18, Candidate)

Another program graduate added to that perspective and highlighted the value of planning, differentiation, and assessment in working to meet the needs of P-12 students:

> The skills that we were learning in evaluating where the students were at, and determining how much support or challenge that they needed, and what type of activities to use to develop the next steps and skills, and managing the classroom environment with students doing more than one thing at a time. I think as long as you can evaluate your situation and make a plan for the progress forward, then it doesn't matter what type of student you have, you can meet those needs.
>
> (Interview #1, Graduate)

Similarly, a candidate, who was an in-service teacher, highlighted that the skills TEACH-NOW emphasized encouraged candidates to develop a structured approach to teaching: "I came to TEACH-NOW, because I wanted to become a more structured, organized teacher who has a pool of resources to do stuff with different levels of students" (Interview #20, Candidate). Underlying the thoughts of this candidate and the other quoted above was a sense of confidence in their ability to be effective in helping all students learn. Having learned the "practical sides of teaching," the candidates and

graduates I interviewed felt they were ready to serve their students, or would be by the program's end.

Yet, while candidates and graduates generally agreed with TEACH-NOW's emphasis on practice and effective teaching, the program's universal stance often required them to self-manage their experiences in order to ensure that they met program requirements. In particular, I found that individual candidates had to navigate program requirements differently depending on their content area, grade level, and/or context. As mentioned in Chapter Four, TEACH-NOW's innovative business model and program structure led to the formation of collaborative candidate cohorts "based on time availability." That approach often resulted in cohorts comprised not only of candidates representing a variety of geographic locations but also a variety of content areas and grade levels. Thus, as a matter of utility and resting on the assumption that good teaching transcends setting and subject, TEACH-NOW's curriculum focused on instructional strategies that were understood to be universal. The program expected candidates to enter with content area expertise. As one candidate explained:

> They're very heavy on the flipped classroom technique and getting students to be interactive and getting teachers to be perfect in their norms, procedures and expectations, and differentiating lessons and things like that. They really stress that kind of stuff. There hasn't been anything as far as content specific...It's quite mixed for the different kinds of teachers in our cohort. So, I guess, that's all on your own, all the content knowledge study (Interview #24, Candidate)

Along similar lines, a program graduate suggested, "TEACH-NOW is going to give 'how' to teach it, but it's not going to give you the 'what' to teach. You have to get it on your own" (Interview #6, Graduate).

Thus, in prioritizing the "how" and emphasizing universal instructional practices in its program content, TEACH-NOW required candidates to adapt the curriculum to their specific content areas, grade levels, school cultures, and countries. Not only did candidates have to ensure that they had the expertise to teach their own content area but also they needed to translate TEACH-NOW's universal pedagogies to work for their individual content areas. What this means is that rather than learning pedagogical content knowledge from TEACH-NOW, candidates had to create that knowledge for themselves by interpreting and adapting the instructional practices emphasized in the program's curriculum to fit their own subjects and students. In a sense, candidates' individual navigation of the curricular content reflected Turkle's (2017) "new state of self" (p. 16) that I introduced in Chapter Two. According to Turkle (2017), "Our new devices provide space for the emergence of a new state of the self, itself, split between screen and the physical real, wired into existence through technology" (p. 16). In the case of TEACH-NOW, candidates had to negotiate a split between the program content delivered on the virtual classroom screen and the teaching they had to do in the physical real. Put another way, because their preparation experience was "wired into existence through technology," each TEACH-NOW candidate had to bridge the digital and physical divide by self-managing the parts of the program that depended on face-to-face interaction.

To help candidates negotiate the divide between their online learning and face-to-face teaching, the TEACH-NOW program asked candidates to complete assignments

according to their specific circumstances. For example, one activity asked candidates to complete a task in a way that was "appropriate for the grade level and subject you are or will be teaching" (Module 5, Unit 1, Activity 1, para. 3) and another instructed them to select a resource "for the content area or grade level you are seeking certification" (Module 6, Unit 1, Activity 1, para. 3). When it came to clinical experiences and addressing the two InTASC "Content Knowledge" standards, during Module 8, as mentioned earlier, TEACH-NOW required candidate's to demonstrate their "content knowledge and application of content through the development and implementation of a cross-curricular or theme-based project-based learning unit" (Module 8, Unit 5, Activity 1, para. 1). In order to ensure candidates met those standards, TEACH-NOW required them to submit an edited and annotated video of themselves teaching the lesson, the lesson plans used, a detailed reflection, and an video or audio recording of their feedback/debriefing session with their mentors. Using those artifacts, instructors and mentors evaluated candidates' performance.

In discussing the necessity of getting the "what" of their teaching on their own and the mixed composition of their collaborative candidate cohorts, candidates mentioned both benefits and challenges. As one candidate explained, "I wish that our group had a little bit more teachers working with younger students because I have teachers talking about high schoolers, and it doesn't necessarily relate to me...Their ideas aren't going to work necessarily in my classroom" (Interview #17, Candidate). Yet that same candidate went on to acknowledge that collaboration with teachers in other content areas and grade levels, gave her "a broader perspective and kind of an understanding of the whole system and what I am preparing these students for. (Interview #17, Candidate) Another candidate

shared a similar view. While noting drawbacks, the candidate also raised the idea of how the approach allowed for a "broader perspective":

> With the mixed cohort, I'm asked to peer review someone's lesson plan for kindergarten, which isn't my cup of tea. But it gives you a broader perspective. It's got its pluses and minuses. I think it could be super valuable if I had a whole posse of social studies secondary candidates to hang out with and bounce ideas off of. (Interview #16, Candidate)

Contrasting with that candidate's desire for a "posse" of candidates seeking licensure in the same subject area, a TEACH-NOW graduate took the position that subject matter was secondary to practice. According to that graduate:

> The variety was very refreshing…I did connect; we had two or three other teachers in my group that were teaching math or science. I'm teaching both math and physics. But I would say that I think I got more collaboration out of my work with other members in the group, and not the math or the science teachers. I don't think it's because of our subject-matter, I think it was just maybe we were challenging ourselves in different ways. I found more similar challenges, or practical advice, or ways to help other people. I don't think it was subject-matter related. (Interview # 1, Graduate)

The idea of "practical advice" connects to the second way in which candidates had to self-manage the program content to suit their individual circumstances—context. As noted, many TEACH-NOW candidates were already teachers and, thus, were able to maximize the "practical application" aspect of TEACH-NOW's focus on practice. This is represented by the perspective of one candidate who was already working as a math

teacher before enrolling in TEACH-NOW. According to that candidate, "[I]f you keep reading theory, and you don't get a chance to practice it, it just becomes boring. But now I learn something, I go practice it, I see the results… I can just keep growing on the job" (Interview #20, Candidate).

However, as the instructor quoted earlier in this chapter pointed out, not all TEACH-NOW candidates were in a position to immediately "grow on the job" because they were not yet working in schools. As a result, those candidates needed to adapt the program to their context. As one candidate who was early in the program and not already working as a teacher explained, "I think we have to be a little more creative and use our experiences from our childhood or from our education experience and kind of apply it there because we don't have complete insight into a current classroom right now" (Interview #17, Candidate). In having to "be a little more creative," true "preservice" teacher candidates like the one quoted here had to self-manage their experiences of learning to teach in ways that allowed them to develop as educators in non-school settings. As the instructor quoted earlier explained, "[T]hey use their kids, or they use their neighbor or family members, but they still get the concept of teaching" (Interview #9, Instructor). Of course, practicing the work of teaching with one's kids or neighbors is not the same as doing so in an actual classroom. Thus, the need for some TEACH-NOW candidates to be "creative" raises questions about the efficacy of TEACH-NOW's practice-focus for candidates without immediate access to classrooms.

Nonetheless, and as I have detailed here, the candidates I interviewed, no matter whether they were actually preservice or were already in-service teachers, viewed the program's emphasis on instruction as valuable. The thoughts of one candidate illustrate

how TEACH-NOWs prioritizing of practice and effective instructional strategies helped to establish its credibility. According to that candidate, "So I feel like okay, I'm learning from a good school, because I'm actually seeing, you know, expert teachers doing what TEACH-NOW is teaching me (Interview #18, Candidate). By positioning TEACH-NOW as a "good school" and in seeing the focus of its content in the practice of "expert teachers," the words of that candidate reflected confidence in the institution's approach to teacher preparation.

Preparation Provider is a Support Resource: "They're All Very Positive and Supportive"

As detailed earlier in this chapter, TEACH-NOW worked deliberately to integrate recognized markers of legitimacy, such as accreditation and professional partnerships, into its institutional operations in order to establish its credibility and quality. In doing so, I found that the institution worked to convey a sense of trust to its teacher candidates. Specifically, I found that TEACH-NOW faculty and leaders engaged in actions to guide candidates in their self-management of their experience of learning to teach and thus emphasized the idea that a key role of a teacher preparation provider is that of supporter. My analysis suggests that TEACH-NOW supported and encouraged its diverse population of teacher candidates by utilizing particular teacher education pedagogies and support structures.

All 10 of the candidates/graduates I interviewed described positive experiences with the program's approach to instruction and communication. In particular, candidates praised the accessibility and responsiveness of TEACH-NOW's instructors and staff. The thoughts of one candidate are representative of that shared viewpoint: "They're all very

positive and supportive. And if ever I need anything, I send them an email, and they respond really quick" (Interview #17, Candidate). I suggest that by having the capacity to respond to and meet the individual needs of candidates, TEACH-NOW generated a sense of security and increased its perceived legitimacy. As another candidate explained, "I have never encountered a situation where I have had a response later than 24 hours. They have been very responsive, very approachable" (Interview #20, Candidate). That responsiveness was critical to the institution's support of candidates as those candidates worked to manage and succeed in a teacher preparation program that, as I discussed earlier, required candidates to adopt a state of self "split between screen and the physical real" (Turkle, 2017, p. 16).

In addition to the communicative nature of the program's instructors, candidates also appreciated the instructional pedagogies the instructors employed and recognized how those pedagogies connected to the effective teaching practices they were learning in the program. For example, as one candidate explained, TEACH-NOW instructors modeled the principles of PBL in their instruction:

I think [the instructors are] all following a similar approach where they're not really teaching, like in a traditional, you know, 'teaching way.' They just facilitate discussions. They just ask one question, and then they expect the cohort members to come up with the answers. And there are times when they don't even like give a final answer. Like, we need to figure out the answers ourselves. I think they work under the PBL, you know it's more like PBL, project-based learning. Like, figure out the answer yourself. (Interview #18, Candidate)

A program graduate shared a similar viewpoint and highlighted instructors' student-centered approach: "They really put the ball in our court, give us the power to learn and to develop ourselves. I think that's modeling what they expect us to do in our classrooms as well (Interview #1, Graduate).

It is important to note that while TEACH-NOW instructors followed "a similar approach" to instruction and "modeled" effective teaching practices, assertions that were confirmed by my observations, four candidates did note variation among instructors in terms of feedback or grading (Interviews # 7, #16, #20, #21). Yet, one of those candidates framed that variation as a positive and posited:

> The good thing is, we have had a variety of instructors. We had one instructor who was extremely empathetic, and she knew what we were going through, and she knew the pressures of the course and of doing our regular jobs. She would offer a lot of support. Then we had another instructor who was much younger, but I have to say he was very crisp with his feedback and expectations. (Interview #20, Candidate).

Whether they were empathetic or modeled clear expectations, I found that TEACH-NOW instructors and staff helped to foster the social presence of the preparation program and create what Garrison would call "a climate of trust" (Garrison, 2017, p. 45). By working to generate a positive learning environment within its online teacher preparation program, TEACH-NOW understood that it is "crucial that each student feels welcomed and is given the reassurance that they are part of a purposeful community of learners" (Garrison, 2017, p. 45). Another way in which the institution built a sense of support for candidates was through its use of the "End-of-Module Survey." Found on the

learning platform at the end of each module, the surveys were designed to be "a quick check for feedback on module activities and instructor support" (*Quality Assurance Plan*, p. 35). By soliciting feedback, TEACH-NOW indicated to its candidates that it valued their perspectives on their experience of learning to teach.

Finally, the following vignette drawn from my field notes of an observation of a cohort's last virtual class session offer a specific illustration of how TEACH-NOW and its instructors worked to create a sense of value and community for its candidates:

> *When the virtual class session began, the traditional graduation song, "Pomp and Circumstance," played in the background. As the instructor started the session, she explained that, to her, "Pomp and Circumstance," represented coming to the end of something. She shared with the seven candidates in the session that she is excited for them. The candidates were all smiling. The instructor then used the bulk of the session as an opportunity for candidates to share their career plans, their experiences with student feedback surveys, and to ask her final questions about outstanding activities/requirements.*

> *Later, as the session drew to a close, the instructor again played "Pomp and Circumstance." She then remarked to the cohort that it had been her pleasure to be their instructor and that she would miss them. In response, the candidates made the motion of turning over imaginary tassels and throwing imaginary graduation caps. The candidates then spent several minutes thanking each other for their comments and support throughout the program and offering final goodbyes and best wishes.* (Observation #10, Module 8)

By granting the candidates a ceremonious send-off, the instructor encouraged them to view the ending of the program as a significant accomplishment worthy of celebration. In doing so, the instructor also intimated to the candidates that their preparation was a legitimate higher education experience. I would argue that the smiles of the candidates suggested they agreed.

Through the availability, timely communications, and pedagogies of its instructors, I found that TEACH-NOW fostered a supportive environment for its candidates. By maximizing the capacities of "technologies of connection" (Turkle, 2017, p. 152) such as synchronous videoconferencing, email, and instant messaging platforms, TEACH-NOW signaled to its candidates that although they could, and sometimes *needed* to, manage aspects of their experience of learning to teach on their own, they did not have to do so without the institution's help or encouragement.

Conclusion

TEACH-NOW's founders and leaders understood that while it was good to be innovative, it was necessary to be legitimate. Thus, as I have argued in this chapter, the institution worked to maximize the value of its innovative aspects by establishing its legitimacy as a teacher preparation provider through its curricular content and institutional operations. In doing so, the institution aimed to indicate to prospective candidates as well as the broader teacher education community that as an online new graduate school of education it was serious about the work of teacher preparation and not simply caught up in the "gee-whiz factor of technology" (Garrison, 2017, p. 170) or profit from the business of technology.

In a teacher education landscape in which "traditional" college- and university-based programs are sometimes labeled as "mediocre" or deemed to be failing American schoolchildren (Greenberg et al., 2013, p. 1), TEACH-NOW's deliberate effort to establish its legitimacy was important. By achieving known markers of credibility, TEACH-NOW aimed to show that not only was it an innovative "game-changer" in the field but also that it knew the importance of signaling to other players in the teacher preparation "game" that it could deliver a quality teacher preparation experience. This was reflected in the aspiration of TEACH-NOW's founder and CEO who explained, "I'm totally focused on being the best" (Interview #27, Founder/CEO).

CHAPTER SIX

Overarching Themes and Implications

As detailed throughout this dissertation, both new graduate schools of education and fully online teacher preparation programs are two emerging phenomena in initial teacher education positioned to challenge the longstanding dominance and perceived "mediocrity" of traditional college- and university-based schools of education and teacher preparation programs. During the three-and-a-half-year timeframe in which this case study was developed, researched, and written, the presence of both phenomena expanded considerably. The largest nGSE, Relay GSE, grew from eight to 17 campuses (Relay GSE, 2019). In addition, new nGSEs were established, bringing the total count of operating nGSEs to 10 in June 2019 with an 11th set to open in 2020. The prevalence of fully online teacher preparation also spread with the emergence of new or expanded university-based programs (Crayton, 2019; LaChance, 2019; Nott, 2018) as well as non-university alternate-route programs (Saba, 2018).

At the same time that these two phenomena grew, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos worked to promote a higher education reform agenda that decreases regulation—especially as it relates to accreditation—and increases technological innovation and competition (USDOE, 2019a). DeVos's proposed reforms, a draft of which reached stakeholder committee consensus in April 2019 (USDOE, 2019a), are intended to give accrediting bodies more flexibility in terms of program approval—a change that would likely benefit institutions that offer distance-based and alternative approaches to higher education (Douglas-Gabriel, 2019). Specifically, Devos' proposed reforms would advantage online and competency-based academic programs through the

loosening of policies and expectations related to higher education credit hours, instruction, and student-faculty interaction (Douglas-Gabriel, 2019). Online and competency-based programs are consistent with the innovation, flexibility, and self-pacing DeVos deems as important to many consumers of higher education today (Douglas-Gabriel, 2019). According to the USDOE, the proposed reforms are "designed to promote innovation, protect students while ensuring they have access to the higher education options that meet their unique needs, and reduce irrelevant and overburdensome regulations on higher education institutions" (USDOE, 2019b, para. 2).

Thus, in a changing education landscape where teacher preparation and higher education at-large are being relocated from the traditional knowledge center of the university to new and alternate physical and digital spaces, the online TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education reflects a unique confluence of several education reforms and innovations. As I detailed in Chapter Two, there is a very limited amount of in-depth knowledge about fully online teacher preparation programs and virtually no independent research on nGSEs. Therefore, TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program represents a timely research opportunity of substantive importance.

In conducting a qualitative case study of TEACH-NOW, I sought to understand how the institution conceptualized and enacted its approach to teacher preparation. Intended to be descriptive and interpretive, this case study's purpose was neither to evaluate nor to judge TEACH-NOW, but rather to understand the program from the perspectives of its participants. In other words, the point was to understand how teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW made sense to its founders, leaders, and participants. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter Two, my case study of TEACH-NOW was one of four

case studies of teacher preparation at nGSEs that together constitute a major aspect of our larger study of the nGSE phenomenon. While TEACH-NOW represents an "intrinsic" (Stake, 2006) case, interesting and significant in its own right, it is also "instrumental" (Stake, 2006) in that it helps our research team to understand features of the broader nGSE phenomenon beyond the individual case itself.

In terms of its "intrinsic" value, I have shown in this dissertation that participants in TEACH-NOW's teacher preparation program understood TEACH-NOW as an innovative yet legitimate alternative to "traditional" models of learning to teach. As such, I found that TEACH-NOW was successful in operating at the nexus of a complex tension wherein it had to balance the institutional goal of its founders and leaders to be a technology-centric "game changer" in the field of teacher education with the consumer desire for a credible and quality preparation experience. The innovation-legitimation "push and pull" dynamic was at the center of how TEACH-NOW conceptualized and enacted teacher preparation. Specifically, as I have shown throughout this dissertation, this dynamic played out in five key areas: 1) TEACH-NOW's business model; 2) its emphasis on technology; 3) its program structure; 4) its program content; 5) its institutional conduct. Through strong program coherence that to helped support its innovative aspects and the achievement of accepted markers of credibility, I found that TEACH-NOW offered a self-managed experience of learning to teach that could be considered both innovative and legitimate.

In relation to the "instrumental" value of the case study, my analysis of the innovation-legitimation "push and pull" at TEACH-NOW not only provided insight into the teacher preparation approach taken by one nGSE but also illuminated several

important themes related to nGSEs, fully online teacher preparation, and technology and innovation in higher education. In the section below, I consider three overarching themes and their significance to the nGSE phenomenon, the wider field of teacher education, and the more general education landscape. I follow my analysis of those themes by discussing the specific research, practice, and policy implications of my case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW.

Three Overarching Themes

By drawing on the findings that I detailed in Chapters Four and Five and situating those findings within a current education context that privileges innovation and competition, I identified three overarching themes as part of my qualitative case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW: 1) the important impact of global consumer demand for teacher preparation; 2) the complex role of "technologies of connection" in educational settings; 3) the interrelated roles of context, content, and control in the experience of learning to teach. Each stand-alone theme is significant, but when the three are understood as overlapping and interconnected, they offer valuable insight into current and future directions related to teacher preparation specifically as well as the work of P-12 teachers more generally. I unpack each overarching theme below.

The Important Impact of Global Consumer Demand for Teacher Preparation

TEACH-NOW is both an accredited teacher preparation provider and a profitable for-profit company. As I showed in Chapter Four, the institution employed an innovative business model that addressed an explicit higher education market opportunity: the global need for efficient, flexible, and cost-effective teacher preparation. Deliberately designed to diverge from "traditional" teacher preparation approaches, TEACH-NOW attracted a

worldwide pool of teacher candidates looking for a low-cost, streamlined, and legitimate experience of learning to teach. By focusing on the power of consumer choice and demand, TEACH-NOW quickly emerged as a popular and lucrative proprietary institution of higher education based in the United States, but serving teacher candidates around the globe.

By tapping into worldwide consumer demand for teacher preparation and an apparent international interest in U.S.-based teacher licensure, TEACH-NOW reflected the growing impact of globalization on the field of higher education. According to Ennew, a scholar of higher education marketing and management, and Greenaway, a noted economist, (2012):

> The main social and economic processes that are driving globalization more broadly have also created the conditions which have driven a step change in international activity in institutions of higher learning. Dramatic falls in the costs associated with transport and communications have served as enabling factors, as have liberalization and increases in private sector investment. On the demand side, increasingly global labor markets, the knowledge-economy-driven competition for talent and the recognition of the benefits of international education for individuals have combined to underpin rapid growth in academic mobility. (pp. 1-2)

As an online nGSE that catered to a specific market demand for preparation and licensure, TEACH-NOW understood the "benefits of international education" in today's globalized teacher labor markets. Capitalizing on the notion of "academic mobility," the

institution offered a pathway to U.S.-based teacher certification that utilized technology to maximize accessibility and efficiency while also keeping costs low.

Furthermore, by emphasizing technology, 21st century skills, and universally applicable instructional strategies throughout the content of its preparation program, TEACH-NOW positioned its work as readying its candidates with the knowledge and abilities required to teach in a "dynamic and diverse world" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1). In doing so, the institution's conceptualization and enactment of teacher preparation reflected what a number of scholars have described as the "internationalization of teacher education" (e.g., Larsen, 2016; Roberts, 2007; Sieber & Mantel, 2012). By giving the process of learning to teach a global dimension and accommodating candidates in locales around the world, TEACH-NOW was in concert with what Roberts (2007) suggests is the "potential for the preparation of prospective teachers as globally competent individuals and educators" (p. 24). Given that TEACH-NOW enrolled candidates living in more than 110 different countries and that TEACH-NOW encouraged them to view their responsibility as educators to prepare their students for a networked global society, its internationalized perspective on teacher preparation was consistent with both its innovative business model and its assumptions about teaching and learning in the 21st century.

In addition, as a profitable proprietary business operating in today's globalized education market, TEACH-NOW took advantage of a higher education landscape reshaped in recent years by neoliberal ideologies and corporate-based reforms (Baltodano, 2012). As an online graduate school of education, TEACH-NOW was clearly attractive to prospective teachers (and to those who referred prospective candidates to the

program) and thus represented increased competition for "traditional" college- and university-based schools of education. With its convenience and cost-efficiency, TEACH-NOW aligned with many of the aspects of the successful for-profit institutions that Morey (2001) highlighted nearly two decades ago:

> For-profit institutions focus on students as customers and provide services for them that minimize the amount of bureaucracy through which a student must navigate. Although many adults enrolled in for-profit institutions recognize that they are not receiving a degree from a "brand name" university, the convenience and ability to reduce time to the degree attract them. Their objective is to enter a career. (p. 302)

My analysis suggests that the career-oriented objectives of TEACH-NOW's candidates were clear and contributed to the institution's organic, word-of-mouth marketing, and ultimately, to its growth and popularity.

TEACH-NOW's increasing popularity and ability to tap into a global market is troublesome for those committed to more traditional models of teacher preparation. Competition from teacher preparation providers like TEACH-NOW have put further strain on college and university programs, which as I described in Chapter One, are already shouldering the blame for not producing effective teachers. According to Baltodano (2012):

> As the "cash cows" of most universities, schools of education are also pressured to increase student enrollment and to compete with all the purveyors of public and private. education, which in this era of corporate schooling includes online universities, for-profit higher education institutions, and private educational

corporations. Therefore, schools of education are seeking accreditation at higher rates to become more marketable because what sells well is the promise of accountability and excellence. (p. 499)

Yet, what is interesting about TEACH-NOW as it relates to "accountability and excellence," is that it appears that even though it was one of the new "purveyors" of teacher preparation during this "era of corporate schooling," TEACH-NOW also understood the marketability of accreditation. In fact, the existence of a convenient, low-cost, and *accredited* for-profit, online competitor pushed back against popular presumptions that college- and university-based preparation programs are implicitly "better" and more credible than alternative pathways (Fischetti, 2013).

Overall, by responding to global consumer demand for teacher preparation and competing with the offerings of traditional college- and university-based programs, TEACH-NOW represented not only the *relocating* of teacher preparation from the physical spaces of the university to the digital spaces of its platform but also the *repositioning* of teacher preparation from a traditionally local undertaking to a newly global enterprise. This relocation and repositioning raises questions about the future of teacher preparation in an ever-increasingly connected, consumer-driven global economy and helps to inform the implications I discuss later in this chapter.

The Complex Role of "Technologies of Connection" in Educational Settings

In responding to consumer demand for teacher preparation, TEACH-NOW maximized the potential of what Turkle (2017) calls "technologies of connection" (p. 152) to deliver its program online to its international population of candidates through its proprietary learning platform. As I illustrated in Chapters Four and Five, the institution's

utilization of communication and information technologies presented both benefits and tradeoffs for its teacher candidates. TEACH-NOW's reliance on e-learning and the enactment of its program through the various components of its online program structure enabled synchronous and collaborative learning experiences that transcended time and distance and connected candidates around the world. Furthermore, the institution's focus on digital tools and 21st century skills fostered candidates' development as "tech-savvy" educators, which most candidates I interviewed considered necessary to their current or future practice. However, despite the many ways in which technologies of connection supported candidates' experiences learning to teach, there were also limitations. For example, as shown in Chapter Four, not all candidates adapted easily or willingly to the conditions and requirements of TEACH-NOW's e-learning environment. Furthermore, candidates in some countries encountered technological issues due to government firewalls, contextual limitations, and/or cultural differences. Those limitations and differences serve as an important reminder that although the "global reach of connectivity can make the most isolated outpost into a center of learning and economic activity" (Turkle, 2017, p. 152), there is not a universal lens through which technologies of connection are understood, experienced, or implemented.

Thus, TEACH-NOW's reliance on technology for program delivery and its integration of digital tools into the content of its curriculum underscore the complex role of technology in educational settings and highlights the importance of considering their specific purposes. As discussed in Chapter Five, when it comes to e-learning environments, while Garrison (2017) argues that in today's world a quality educational experience is not contingent on physical proximity, Turkle (2015) posits that there is

value in the "flawed real" (p. 235) of the face-to-face classroom. These two contrasting points of view help to highlight how values, beliefs, and principles related to the larger purposes of education and the places in which teaching and learning occur can vary widely, and therefore also help to underscore the complexity and contentiousness that can arise when educators grapple with integrating technology into educational settings.

Nonetheless, despite differing viewpoints about the role of physical proximity in the "realness" of education, both Garrison (2017) and Turkle (2015, 2017) understand that "the information age and a networked world have forced educators to rethink educational approaches" (Garrison, 2017, p. 21). In higher education this "rethinking" requires a shift wherein institutions and those who teach at them must understand the possibilities of "new paradigms of learning" (Haythornthwaite & Andrews, 2011, p. 2). According to Haythornthwaite and Andrews (2011):

> If we view these changes as an assault on accepted paradigms of teaching and learning—the teacher as authority, online information as unacceptable, students as receivers of knowledge—we miss the opportunity to learn with these changes and take them in our stride as a way of embracing newer forms of education. (pp. 1-2)

As the findings of this case study show, TEACH-NOW's architects understood and accepted those "new paradigms of learning" and, despite some challenges, viewed technologies of connection as a positive advancement in higher education. As discussed above, current consumers of higher education, such as those who enrolled at TEACH-NOW, desire learning experiences that utilize technology to their advantage. Institutions, therefore, must know how to respond to those desires.

Given that millennials and members of Generation Z have lived the majority, and increasingly the *entirety*, of their lives in a world of constant connectivity and dynamic technological advancement (Dimock, 2019), the need for institutions of higher education to embrace "newer forms of education" and respond to the undeniable ubiquity of technology is only logical. For these generations, I would argue, the physical/digital dichotomy is opaque if not obsolete, meaning perceptions of reality are moving beyond simple "either-or" understandings of physical and digital spaces and experiences. As I have mentioned throughout this dissertation, Turkle (2017) describes the "splitting" of our lives across the digital-physical divide as a "new state of the self" (p. 162)—a state of self that contends with both the "online real" and the "physical real." Yet, in considering the lives and education of younger generations (and future teachers), I suggest that perhaps it is more relevant now to think of that state of the self not as "new" or "split" but rather as an inherent and overlapping amalgamation of spaces—each as real and important as the others.

Taking into account the almost seamless integration of technology into the lives of society's younger generations, this case study of TEACH-NOW also highlights the complex responsibility of today's P-12 teachers to utilize technology and connectivity in meaningful and purposeful ways. If one assumes, as TEACH-NOW's founders and leaders did, that among the many tasks placed on the shoulders of 21st century teachers is preparing "students for a newer, digitally advanced world" (Module 3, Unit 2, Activity 1, para. 1) then it is critical that those teachers understand how to use technology in a way that helps—and certainly does not hinder—their students' learning. To foster that understanding within a teacher's practice, Keefe and Steiner (2018) argue that teachers'

"technology fitness" (p. 7) needs to be both evaluated and supported as they work to incorporate digital tools into their classrooms effectively. Drawing a comparison to the importance of improving and maintaining one's physical fitness, Keefe and Steiner (2018) suggest that teachers need technology-related knowledge and practice in order to be motivated to use it purposefully and actively in their teaching. According to Keefe and Steiner (2018), teachers being technologically "fit" is of particular importance because, among other factors, "technology saturates our society, and schools must take the lead in modeling its ethical use for students" (p. 12).

Along these lines, Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) offer a helpful perspective on how teachers (and schools) can model ethical and purposeful use of technology. Specifically, Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) suggest educators adopt a "harmonized" orientation towards technology based on the notion that "[s]ometimes we need hi-tech, and sometimes we want hi-touch" (p. 44). According to Hargreaves and Shirley:

> The harmonizing challenge is to engage with the possibilities of technology but not to become so attracted to and dependent on technology that we imagine we are smarter and better than anyone or anything else. At the point where we are inclined to indulge an Olympian moment of technological triumph and self-gratification, this is the time we are liable to fail and fall. (p. 44)

The ability to enact a harmonized orientation towards the integration of technology into one's teaching practice requires the proper preparation to do so. In aiming to have its teacher candidates "learn to think critically about—and put into practice—technology as a key addition to their instructional toolbox" (*Curriculum Development Manual*, p. 4), TEACH-NOW represented movement towards that harmonized orientation. TEACH-

NOW's nurturing and support of the "technology fitness" (Keefe & Steiner, 2018, p. 7) of its candidates thus offers an important perspective on the technology-related needs and practices of today's (and tomorrow's) teachers.

Context, Content, and Control in the Experience of Learning to Teach

The final overarching theme that emerged from my case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW builds upon the two themes outlined above and has to do with issues of context, content, and control in the experience of learning to teach. In this dissertation, I have argued that, as an online nGSE, TEACH-NOW created a tech-centric learning environment for its teacher candidates that required them to self-manage their program experiences in accordance with their individual needs and circumstances. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, instead of being constrained by the perceived rigidity of more "traditional" approaches to teacher preparation, TEACH-NOW candidates self-managed their experiences of learning to teach based on notions related to efficiency, technology, autonomy, and practice. Although TEACH-NOW provided its candidates sound structures for support and collaboration, the candidates retained a marked level of control and independence over their personal experiences. That was particularly true as it related to the program's universal stance on the nature of teaching and candidates' individual adaptation of the program's generalized curriculum to their specific context in terms of content areas, grade levels, school cultures, and countries.

When paired with their remarkable geographic diversity, the self-management and independence of TEACH-NOW's candidates diverged from the more localized, contextualized, and institutionally-organized experiences of candidates at the other nGSEs we are focusing on in the larger study of teacher preparation at nGSEs. For

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example, Miller (2017) found that candidates at Sposato GSE experienced learning to teach through a hyper-prescriptive and tightly governed program that aimed to prepare them to teach exclusively in high-needs, high-achieving urban charter schools. As a result, Sposato required its candidates to contractually commit to the specific kind of teacher preparation it offered and encouraged those unwilling or unable to meet their requirements to exit the program. Meanwhile, Sanchez (2019) found that High Tech High employed an "embedded" approach to teacher education rooted in assumptions about equity, theory-practice relationships, and the particular institutional environments in which teaching and learning occur. Based on those assumptions, candidates learning to teach at High Tech High experienced a program characterized by a constructivist philosophy that not only aligned with the same project-based approach that guided the organization's network of charter schools but was also located within the institutional environments of those schools. Finally, although we are still collecting data at the site, our preliminary analysis suggests that teacher candidates in the MAT program at the Richard Gilder Graduate School housed at the American Museum of Natural History have an experience of learning to teach that is sharply focused on science content while maximizing the knowledge resources of its museum setting. Specifically, the institution develops candidates' deep knowledge of earth science content and pedagogy through scientific research and museum teaching requirements. Overall, in understanding learning to teach as a highly context-dependent endeavor, these nGSEs contrast with TEACH-NOW's universal approach. While TEACH-NOW handed control to its candidates to contextualize the process of learning to teach, the other nGSEs we are studying controlled both the context *within* and the context *for which* their candidates are being prepared.

Despite these differences, similar to the other nGSEs we are studying, TEACH-NOW operated on the assumption that "teaching is a learned activity that builds on, but goes beyond, individuals' subject matter knowledge, motivation, and/or aptitude" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2019, pp. 10-11). Unlike the other nGSEs, however, TEACH-NOW loosened institutional control over the process of learning to teach, and in doing so, placed the onus on its candidates to manage that "learned activity." As noted, this diverged markedly from the approaches employed at other nGSEs. In contrast, TEACH-NOW's approach was consistent with the fully online approaches to teacher preparation that have been studied by other researchers including Banegas and Manzur Busleiman (2014) and Cain and Philip (2013). In their examination of candidates' motivation levels in an online preservice teacher preparation program in Argentina, Banegas and Manzur Busleiman's (2014) found that along with obtaining the teaching degree itself, "autonomy, framed in self-management and self-access to course materials, was also regarded as a major factor for sustaining motivation" (p. 140). Similarly, in their study of candidates enrolled in a preservice teacher education program in Trinidad, Cain and Philip (2013) found that candidates' personal attributes including planning and time management facilitated their learning. TEACH-NOW's consistency with the findings of other studies of fully online programs helps to underscore the fact that many of those who choose online teacher preparation seem to share a particular kind of motivation and aptitude that thrives amidst high levels of independence and autonomy.

However, as noted above, the learned activity of teaching extends beyond motivation and aptitude to also include understandings of the purpose of teaching and the place in which it occurs. Specific understandings of purpose and place in teaching often

connect to how and why certain subjects, pedagogies, and concepts are incorporated into a teacher's practice and how preparation programs guide that incorporation. This is particularly true of how some preparation programs ready candidates to enact subject-specific practices and/or to address social inequities in the classroom. Thus, it is important to consider how in entrusting its teacher candidates to take control over the content-related and contextual elements of their own experiences of learning to teach, TEACH-NOW also relinquished tight institutional oversight of pedagogical content knowledge and social and cultural issues—two concepts often deeply intertwined into the teacher preparation approaches of nGSEs and more traditional programs.

In what are now considered seminal pieces, Shulman (1986, 1987) argued that pedagogical content knowledge was one of the essential components to the knowledge base needed for teaching. According to Shulman (1987):

> [Pedagogical content knowledge] represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests of learners, and presented for instruction. Pedagogical content knowledge is the category most likely to distinguish the understanding of the content specialist from that of the pedagogue" (p. 8).

Shulman's thinking and research about the knowledge base for teaching, and pedagogical content knowledge in particular, had a tremendous impact not just on programs of research but also on the conceptualization and enactment of many teacher preparation programs in the United States and elsewhere (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Gitomer & Zisk, 2015). As a result, since the mid-1980s, subject-specific teaching courses (rather

than generic courses) have been a central feature of secondary teacher preparation programs and "pedagogical courses devoted to the teaching of reading, art, music, mathematics, science, and social studies" (Lucas, 1997, p. 104) have been integrated into the coursework of elementary teacher preparation programs. In this sense, TEACH-NOW departs from the current common curricular practice of traditional teacher preparation programs and reflects a move away from tight institutional control over the development of candidates' pedagogical content knowledge. Instead, as discussed in Chapter Five, candidates in TEACH-NOW's program learned instructional strategies conceptualized as universally effective and, with the guidance of their instructors and mentors and the support of their collaborative cohorts, candidates assumed responsibility for blending these strategies with their content area knowledge.

Similarly, TEACH-NOW also placed the responsibility on candidates to shape their teaching practice in accordance with the social and cultural issues of their individual school and country contexts. Again with the support of their cohort members and instructors, candidates examined diversity, equity, and special education and considered how such issues were (or were not) connected to their specific settings. Once more, this approach diverges from the highly place-based, highly-contextualized approaches to teacher preparation employed by some nGSEs (Miller, 2017; Sanchez, 2019) and university-based programs (Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a). TEACH-NOW's unique approach to social and cultural issues was a product of its position as an institution that tapped into worldwide consumer demand for teacher preparation and thus prepared a diverse population of teacher candidates for a wide range of school and country contexts. A highly-contextualized and localized conception of these issues would

not align with TEACH-NOW's universalized stance on the nature of teaching. Because TEACH-NOW candidates were located in hundreds of countries around the world and taught in an extraordinary array of school settings—private, public, rural, urban, diverse, homogenous, well-resourced, under-resourced—it would not have made sense logically (or logistically) for the institution to focus explicitly on the needs of low-income urban American schoolchildren, for example. Instead, it universalized the practices and pedagogies related to social and cultural issues by emphasizing to its candidates that they must investigate and decide for themselves how to most appropriately address equity issues in their practice depending on the norms and expectations of their particular school community, culture, and locale.

With the increasing internationalization of teacher education, the need to consider *locale* remains important. Hallman (2017) offers an interesting viewpoint that connects issues of diversity and equity in teacher preparation with the two overarching themes about globalization and technology detailed above. Drawing on the concept of "education in uncertain times" (p. 195), which positions this as an era of technological innovation, shifting notions of diversity, and culturally complex P-12 learning environments, Hallman suggests that the preparation of today's millennial teacher candidates requires a deliberate and critical exploration of multiculturalism. According to Hallman (2017):

> While globalization and technology have made us more connected, there is also more active definition of the cultures in which we live and work. As teachers recognize how living in a diverse world impacts teaching and learning within their classrooms, they notice that students are more interconnected than ever before. Yet, students learn and live in their distinct locales. (p. 195)

Because "students learn and live in their distinct locales," Hallman (2017) argues that despite globalized connectivity and a millennial generational ethos that is more accepting of diversity, multiculturalism should still be a centerpiece of teacher preparation. Although we are more connected than ever, cultural differences remain. Thus, as Hallman (2017) points out, teacher preparation programs working with millennial teacher candidates need to ensure that those candidates understand that inequities persist so that they can better serve the needs of students "who do not have access to the tools needed for success in a globalized world" (p. 202).

I include Hallman's (2017) viewpoint here because when considered alongside TEACH-NOW's approach, it underscores that understandings of the impact of globalization and technology on teacher preparation vary and also shows that issues related to context, content, and control in a teacher candidate's preparation experience play out differently depending on the goals, practices, and priorities undergirding their program's conceptualization of teacher preparation.

Teacher Education Research, Practice, and Policy Implications

This case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW produced an evidence-based and nuanced understanding of two intersecting and understudied phenomena—teacher preparation at nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation—and also offered insight into globalized, market-based and technological innovations in education. Based on my findings and the three overarching themes detailed above, in the sections below I discuss the specific teacher education research, practice, and policy implications of my case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW.

Implications for Research

As mentioned, TEACH-NOW reflected both the relocation of teacher preparation from the physical spaces of the university to the digital spaces of its platform and the repositioning of teacher preparation from a local undertaking to a global enterprise. As such, this case study has several implications for the field of teacher education research. These implications are related not only to its position at the intersection of the nGSE phenomenon and fully online teacher preparation phenomenon but they also extend beyond those particular spheres.

As it relates to its broader research implications, my examination of TEACH-NOW offers insight and suggests opportunities for future research in areas connected to the themes detailed earlier in this chapter. TEACH-NOW's success in addressing a global market need by tapping into a worldwide consumer demand for teacher preparation points to the need for more research into the impact of globalization and technologies of connectivity on teacher preparation. As discussed, TEACH-NOW's approach connects to the recent "internationalization of teacher education" (e.g., Larsen, 2016; Roberts, 2007; Sieber & Mantel, 2012) wherein some teacher preparation curricula and practices have expanded to address issues related to teaching and learning in a highly connected world and an expanding globalized economy. Furthermore, as an innovative proprietary company, TEACH-NOW utilized technology to maximize its reach, efficiency, and profitability. Given global consumer interest in innovative preparation pathways, teacher education researchers have a responsibility to continue to examine the impact of globalization and for-profit ventures on the delivery, context, and content of teacher preparation. As entrepreneurial reforms (Hollar, 2017) and corporatization (Baltodano,

2012) expand and reshape the field, this research is vital to those working in traditional college- and university-based programs as they attempt to keep pace with the interests and desires of teacher preparation consumers.

In addition, as an "instrumental" case of the phenomenon of teacher preparation at nGSEs, this study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW helps to expand our understanding of nGSEs and has implications for the ongoing examination of the larger phenomenon. Our ongoing larger nGSE study is currently focusing on four key dimensions of teacher preparation at nGSEs—1) mission; 2) institutional contexts and environments; 3) conceptualization and enactment of the project of learning to teach; 4) funding. All of these are important. However, the findings of this case study point to additional areas of interest. In particular, as touched upon across the three overarching themes detailed above, globalization and technology emerged as important contributing factors not only to TEACH-NOW's innovative teacher preparation model but also to its notable institutional growth and success. Thus, our study of the larger phenomenon of teacher preparation at nGSEs would be enriched by an exploration of how other the nGSEs situate the process of learning to teach within today's globalized, networked society. In particular, based on my findings, the larger study should take up how other nGSEs understand 21st century teaching and learning and position the role of digital tools in teacher preparation and P-12 classrooms.

Finally, as an online nGSE, this case study of TEACH-NOW also has implications for the exploration of fully online teacher preparation. Given that the field of initial teacher education continues to evolve beyond the time and distance constraints of traditional brick-and-mortar preparation programs, ongoing exploration and interrogation

of the impact of e-learning and synchronous communication technologies on online teacher preparation programs remain critical. When paired with the existing research, the findings of this case study of teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW point to several lines of research that should be developed by researchers both inside and outside of teacher education to continue investigation of the phenomenon of online teacher preparation and those it impacts.

Specifically, I suggest that researchers need to move beyond mainly quantitative comparisons between face-to-face and online programs and candidates. In particular, the teacher education community would benefit from more qualitative and mixed methods studies that explore the dispositions, needs, and expectations of online candidates. In addition, more case study-based research is needed to unpack instructor-candidate dynamics in fully online programs and how they are similar or different across preparation programs. Lastly, this dissertation showed that TEACH-NOW was able to establish its legitimacy through the achievement of known markers of credibility. However, ongoing concerns about the quality and readiness of teachers prepared completely online remain, and thus, more research is necessary that investigates their experiences and performance once they have completed teacher preparation. Along these lines, we need longitudinal investigations into the P-12 teaching careers of online program graduates in order to provide deeper, more detailed explorations of their classroom experiences and professional lives as practicing teachers.

Implications for Practice

This case study helps to expand understanding of online teacher preparation, and as a result, offers insight for teacher educators and programs involved in that growing

field. However, TEACH-NOW's innovative aspects can also be informative to more traditional programs that are trying to compete with new preparation pathways. My analysis of TEACH-NOW's enactment of teacher preparation highlighted how the program understood what Garrison (2017) identifies as important components of an e-learning experience in higher education—the social, cognitive, and teaching presences—and thus provides guidance for teacher preparation programs interested in utilizing technology and digital tools to create collaborative, effective, and low-cost learning experiences for candidates.

As I showed in this dissertation, sequential online modules, synchronous online class sessions, and a collaborative cohort model contributed to TEACH-NOW's success and its self-managed candidate experience. By shedding the traditional semester model used by most other institutions of higher education and instead offering a module-based coursework structure and enrolling new candidates monthly, TEACH-NOW attained the level of program flexibility and accessibility that many online teacher candidates desire (Banegas & Manzur Busleiman, 2014; Cain & Phillip, 2013). Furthermore, TEACH-NOW's utilization of weekly virtual classes demonstrated the institution's belief in both the effectiveness of e-learning and the importance of creating what Garrison (2017) calls "a community of learners to facilitate discourse and reflection" (p. 23). In doing so, TEACH-NOW fostered communication, cohesion, and learning amongst participants and added to the existing literature on the positive aspects of synchronous online classes in higher education (e.g., Bailie, 2015; Ge, 2012; Giesbers et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2012; McDaniels et al., 2016). Moreover, TEACH-NOW's use of collaborative cohorts created valuable interaction points among its diverse population of candidates. Specifically,

TEACH-NOW's instructors and activities required candidates to engage in a number of group-based activities including peer reviews of independent work, contributions to online discussion forums, and breakout groups during virtual class sessions. In doing so, the program generated a supportive preparation environment that aided candidates in their individual adaptation of the program's universal stance fit to their specific context and content area.

Overarching these specific elements of TEACH-NOW's program structure was its emphasis on technology and 21st century skills—aspects of the program directly connected to TEACH-NOW's goal of preparing "candidates who have a passion for teaching tomorrow's students in tomorrow's learning world" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1). As detailed throughout this dissertation, TEACH-NOW viewed one's success in today's networked, global society as inextricably linked to the ability to problem-solve, collaborate, and think critically while also knowing how to use digital tools and technology effectively.

TEACH-NOW's innovative approach thus sheds light on teacher education pedagogies, program structures, and curricular foci that may be of value for others involved in the field of teacher education. Brick-and-mortar programs can learn from TEACH-NOW's streamlined and flexible format and consider ways to increase candidate accessibility by reassessing their program calendars. By moving away from the rigidity of the traditional academic calendar, preparation programs could increase their appeal to non-traditional teacher candidates. Along similar lines, programs could also consider how to leverage the power, popularity, and cost-efficiency of e-learning by incorporating blended or hybrid courses into their program offerings. In addition, face-to-face and

online preparation programs alike can draw on TEACH-NOW's use of synchronous virtual class sessions and collaborative candidate cohorts to foster trust and community across time and distance. Finally, given that current and future generations of teachers will have always lived in a world of dynamic technological advancement (Dimock, 2019), teacher preparation programs and practitioners can also learn from TEACH-NOW's deliberate emphasis and incorporation of digital tools and 21st century skills into its curriculum. In other words, TEACH-NOW's approach helps to reveal the importance of recognizing and maximizing teacher candidates' own technological knowledge and skills while also readying them for the dynamic nature of today's (and tomorrow's) learning world.

Implications for Policy

As detailed above, the Trump Administration's education agenda promotes innovation and deregulation as means to address perceived inadequacies in the American educational system. In early June 2019, a summary of that agenda on the official White House website read:

> Our Nation's elementary and secondary education systems are falling behind the rest of the world. The Administration supports an agenda that provides school choice for parents, better prepares students to compete in a global economy, modernizes an antiquated federal student aid system, and holds higher education institutions more accountable to students and taxpayers alike. (The White House, n.d., para. 1)

Embedded within that summary are two key assumptions related to the findings of this case study. First, consistent with the long-persisting narrative about the failure of

America's schools (and by extension its teachers) to keep pace with the rest of the world, the Trump Administration positions education as central to America's standing in the global economy. Second, reflecting a notion of higher education accountability that centers on economics, this statement about education from the Trump Administration privileges competition and consumerism. This means that policymakers are challenged with the difficult task of ensuring that teacher preparation programs and other education enterprises have the resources to ready P-12 students to maintain America's economic dominance. It also means that they are expected to do so while concurrently attending to the Administration's desire for fiscal conservatism.

When combined, the aims and assumptions of the Trump Administration suggest an educational landscape primed for the continued growth of both nGSEs and fully online teacher preparation programs. As suggested in my discussion of overarching themes earlier in this chapter, this study illuminated today's global nature of teaching and learning and highlighted international consumer demand for U.S.-based teacher preparation. This finding is interesting when compared to concerns from the Administration that we need an educational system that "better prepares students to compete in a global economy." If the American education system is inadequate in the face of a globalized society, why was TEACH-NOW's pathway to U.S.-based teacher certification so attractive to candidates and schools located in other countries? As outlined above part of what made TEACH-NOW attractive was its cost-effective, online format—an education delivery method that is in line with the value the current Administration places on innovation and flexibility on higher education. However, the other aspect of what made TEACH-NOW attractive was that it had achieved two forms

of accreditation—institutional accreditation and programmatic accreditation—both markers of legitimacy that this case study showed were important to teacher preparation consumers.

Therefore, TEACH-NOW's accreditation is a significant factor for policymakers to consider in light of current attempts to loosen the hold of higher education accreditation systems (Douglas-Gabriel, 2019) and reduce federal oversight of higher education quality (Jimenez & Flores, 2019). The current Administration positions less stringent requirements for accrediting bodies as a way to broaden access to federal financial aid dollars, account for students' past work experience, and enable increased innovation in the delivery of higher education programs (USDOE, 2019). However, it is crucial for policymakers to consider the possible tradeoffs of such deregulation, including diminished transparency and unvetted program quality (Flores, 2019).

As illustrated in Chapter Five, for TEACH-NOW's prospective students, transparency and program quality mattered. In fact, our preliminary analysis of the larger nGSE phenomenon indicates most nGSEs have sought some form of institutional accreditation. Thus, as policymakers work to increase access to higher education opportunities, the findings of this case study along with the preliminary findings of the larger nGSE study, suggest that policymakers also need to work to find a proper balance when it comes to the innovation-legitimation "push and pull." Specifically, I suggest that education policymakers must not lose sight of the importance of transparent and democratic accountability measures (Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018a). In teacher preparation, and public education writ large, convenience, competition and privatization should not override credibility. As the findings of this case study of teacher preparation at

TEACH-NOW indicate, innovation and access in higher education, and specifically in teacher education, do not trump quality. Prospective teachers demand quality preparation experiences. P-12 students deserve teachers who have had them.

Conclusion

In explicating the aims and goals of the larger nGSE study, our research team argues the following:

> Although nearly all teacher preparation programs want to produce "excellent" teachers, there are many ideas about what "excellence" means and for whom, and there are differing assumptions and values about the roles of teachers, schools, and teacher educators in school and social change. (Cochran-Smith et al., 2019, p. 20)

This qualitative case study of teacher preparation at the online, for-profit TEACH-NOW Graduate School of Education provides insight into one institution's understanding of excellence. For TEACH-NOW, excellence in teaching (and teacher preparation) was represented by an understanding that "tomorrow's students" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1) will require a teaching force rich in digital and 21st century skills and prepared to aid in their success "in a dynamic and diverse world" (Program Fact Sheet, p. 1).

While the assumptions and values that drove TEACH-NOW's conceptualization and enactment of teacher preparation may differ from those of more "traditional" programs as well as some other nGSEs, its approach was forward-thinking in many ways and is perhaps a portent of more "revolutionary change" (Duncan, 2009, para. 3) to come. When combined, an ever-increasingly connected, consumer-driven global economy and the persistent failure narrative that plagues university-based teacher preparation point to

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the likelihood of continuing relocation of teacher preparation away from the university. This means that ongoing exploration and examination of how teacher preparation is conceptualized and enacted at nGSEs, fully online programs, and other emerging teacher preparation innovations remains critical.

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Appendix A
Virtual Class Session Observation Protocol

Event	Key Focus Items

Virtual Class Session	<u>Technology</u>
	   ● Use or discussion of the e-learning platform and Zoom
	   ● Use or discussion of digital tools/technology
	   ● Glitches or disruptions due to digital tools/technology
	<u>Social Presence</u>
	   ● Candidate-candidate interaction/communication
	   ● Collaboration
	   ● Instructor-candidate interaction/communication
	   ● Relational/Emotional elements
	   ● Candidate participation
	<u>Cognitive Presence</u>
	   ● Critical thinking/reflection activities
	      ○ Questioning
	      ○ Challenging ideas
	      ○ Metacognitive awareness
	   ● Assessments
	<u>Teaching Presence</u>
	   ● Design and organization
	      ○ Expectations and objectives
	   ● Instructional practices
	      ○ Direct instruction
	      ○ Facilitation and direction
	      ○ Discourse
	   ● Feedback

Appendix B
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol: Candidates/Graduates

This interview will be about your experiences as a candidate at/graduate of TEACH-NOW. All of the information in this interview will be kept confidential. Remember that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary: you can refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. This interview will be approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Background
1. Tell me a bit about yourself and how you came TEACH-NOW.
   a. What did you do before the program?
   b. Are you currently teaching? If so, where?
   c. Did you study education as an undergrad? If not, what did you study?
2. Choosing to be a teacher is a big commitment, which people make for lots of different reasons. Why did you choose to teach?
   a. What's the most important thing to you about the work of teaching?
3. What would you say are the most important skills/values/practices of an effective teacher?
   a. What do you believe a teacher should know, do and be responsible for in his/her classroom and school?
   b. What are a teacher's most important professional responsibilities?
4. What interested you in TEACH-NOW?
   a. Would you mind sharing a story about your experience in looking into TEACH-NOW?
   b. What other opportunities you were considering?
5. If you were recruiting somebody else to be in the TEACH-NOW program, what would you say?
   a. Are there key stories or examples that you think represent the kind of experience people have in the program?
   b. Given your own educational background and your TEACH-NOW experiences, what would you say is the ideal way for a teacher to be prepared for a full-time teaching position?

Teacher Preparation at TEACH-NOW/Learning Experience
6. As an online graduate school of education, do you think TEACH-NOW differs from "traditional" teacher preparation programs like those offered at universities?
   a. Related to this, what are your thoughts on the role of technology in teacher preparation?
   b. What are your thoughts on the role of technology in P-12 teaching?
7. How do you think TEACH-NOW's online format influences your experience?
   a. What does a "typical" synchronous class session look like?
   b. What do your interactions with your instructor look like? Your cohort-mates?
   c. What do your assignments/assessments look like? Do those assignments/assessments push you to think critically and/or reflect?

8. Describe the ways in which TEACH-NOW has prepared you for your role as a teacher.
9. What instructional strategies and practices have you been taught or introduced to in your coursework at TEACH-NOW?
    a. What would you say are the most important instructional practices you've learned?
    b. Which of these strategies would you use when you become a full-time teacher (do you use now as a full-time teacher)?
    c. Are there any strategies that you have observed/learned about that you think would not be useful to you as a full-time teacher (have not been useful to you now as a full-time teacher)?
10. Some teacher preparation programs have overall goals connected to addressing issues of equity and social justice, especially as they relate to preparing teachers to work in traditionally underserved schools. Is/was that part of your experience at TEACH-NOW?
    a. For example, do/did you engage in discussions about the relationship between education and social justice issues such as poverty or racism?
    b. How would you define "equity" and "social justice" as they apply to TEACH-NOW and your own work as a teacher?
11. Where will you/did you do your clinical experience?
    a. Who is/was your mentor teacher?
    b. Describe that experience.

Closing
12. Looking forward, what are your career goals/plans after you complete your program?
    a. Where do you hope to work once you graduate? Are there types of schools that you find yourself more or less attracted to base on your beliefs/educational values?
    b. What do you hope to accomplish as a teacher once you graduate from the TEACH-NOW?
    c. Do you see yourself staying in the classroom long-term?
13. Do you have any suggestions for other TEACH-NOW faculty, students, or graduates whom we should talk to?

Appendix C
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol: Instructors/Mentors

This interview will be about your experiences as an instructor/mentor at TEACH-NOW. All of the information in this interview will be kept confidential. Remember that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary: you can refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. This interview will be approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Background
1. Tell me about your role at TEACH-NOW and how you came to work for this program.
    a. What did you do before this work?
    b. Is this your full-time job?
    c. Do you have any current relationships with other teacher preparation programs/schools of education?
2. What attracted or interested you in working with TEACH-NOW?
    o   What have been your prior experiences with teacher education/schools of education?
    o   What have been your prior experiences teaching online?
    o   Are there any features that distinguish TEACH-NOW from these other experiences? If so, could you describe these?
3. What is the purpose of teacher education/teacher preparation?
    a. Related to this, do you have thoughts about how and where teachers should be prepared to teach?
4. As an online graduate school of education, do you think TEACH-NOW differs from "traditional" teacher preparation programs like those offered at universities?
    a. What are your thoughts on the role of technology in teacher preparation?
    b. What are your thoughts on the role of technology in P-12 teaching?
5. Lots of people and groups have different ideas about what an "effective" teacher is. What would you say makes an effective teacher?
    a. What skills/practices do you think are most important for a teacher to have?
    b. What about teachers' attitudes/values—what do you think are the most important things in that area?

Teacher Preparation at TEACH-NOW/Learning Experience
6. (Instructors only) Let's talk about teaching in an e-learning environment. How does TEACH-NOW's online format impact your approach to instruction?
    a. In particular, how do you tailor your curricular and pedagogical decisions to the specific needs and characteristics of an e-learning environment?
    b. How do you foster student-student interaction, communication, and trust-building in the online environment?
    c. How do you foster instructor-student interaction, communication, and trust-building in the online environment?

7. (Instructors only) Thinking about the module/modules you teach, what activities/instructional strategies do you think are the most essential for the candidates during this experience?
   a. Why do you emphasize these strategies over others?
   b. Are there some strategies you intentionally choose not to emphasize in your course?
   c. Do you ask your students to engage in reflection activities? If so, why and what does that look like?
8. How do you assess and evaluate the candidates you teach/mentor?
   a. Why did you choose these assessments?
9. Some teacher preparation programs have overall goals connected to addressing issues of equity and social justice, especially as they relate to preparing teachers to work in traditionally underserved schools. How would you define "equity" and "social justice" as they apply to your work TEACH-NOW?
   a. Do you engage teacher candidates in discussions about the relationship between education and social justice issues such as poverty or racism?
10. Can you describe your interactions with other TEACH-NOW instructors/mentors? TEACH-NOW administration?

Closing
11. Which modules/class sessions do you recommend we observe? Are you open to being observed?
12. Do you have any suggestions for other TEACH-NOW faculty, students, or graduates whom we should talk to?

Appendix D
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol: Leaders/Administrators

This interview will be about your experiences as a leader/administrator at TEACH-NOW. All of the information in this interview will be kept confidential. Remember that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary: you can refuse to answer any question or end this interview at any time. This interview will be approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Background
1. Tell me about your role at TEACH-NOW and how you came to work for this program.
    a. What did you do before this work?
    b. If you had to describe this program to someone not familiar with it, how would you?
2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of teacher education/teacher preparation?
    a. Related to this, do you have thoughts about how and where teachers should be prepared to teach?
3. Why did TEACH-NOW seek IHE-status?
    a. Why is it important to be a graduate school of education as opposed to a certification program?
    b. What advantages come with being a graduate school?
4. As an online graduate school of education, do you think TEACH-NOW differs from "traditional" teacher preparation programs like those offered at universities?
    a. What are your thoughts on the role of technology in teacher preparation?
    b. What are your thoughts on the role of technology in P-12 teaching?
5. Given that there are many different takes on what an "effective teacher" is, what would you say makes for an effective teacher and how is an effective teacher cultivated?
6. What would you say is the mission of TEACH-NOW?
    a. How was the mission/vision developed?
    b. How would you say the mission/vision plays out in the lived experience of administrators, faculty, and teacher candidates at TEACH-NOW?
7. Some teacher preparation programs have overall goals connected to addressing issues of equity and social justice, especially as they relate to preparing teachers to work in traditionally underserved schools. How would you define "equity" and "social justice" as they apply to TEACH-NOW?

Teacher Preparation at TEACH-NOW/Learning Experience
8. How are decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment made TEACH-NOW?
    a. Who is responsible for making sure these decisions are carried out?
9. How is the e-learning platform managed?
10. How are candidates chosen for the program?
    a. What does the application and application review process look like?
11. How are instructors hired for the program?

    a. What does the application and application review process look like?

    b. What does administrator communication with instructors look like?

12. How are P-12 clinical sites and mentor teachers located?

    a. Who is responsible for making sure these relationships are formed?

13. What would you say are the most important outcomes or goals you hope for in teacher preparation at TEACH-NOW?

    a. Do you assess your progress toward these goals? If so, how? What assessments do you put in place here to track your progress toward reaching these goals?

Closing

14. Which program events/modules do you recommend we observe?