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Enabling Professional Development

What Have We Learned?

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In late 1970s, we claimed that staff development was "education's neglected stepchild" (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978, p. 69). This generalization no longer holds. Staff development has moved from a position of disregard in policy circles to become a taken-for-granted component of almost all education reform initiatives.[1] It seems that hardly a state-level reform effort exists that does not include a staff development component. For example, an inventory of staff development opportunities available to California teachers yielded a bewildering bundle of hundreds of state, local, and regional initiatives at an annual taxpayer cost of $1,360 per teacher and $1,800 per administrator. This is approximately 1.8% of the state's $366 million education funding for 1986 (Little et al., 1987). In addition to these direct expenditures, Little and colleagues found that approximately one of every five hours a teacher spends in staff development activities is volunteer time, which, when calculated on the basis of the average teacher's salary, is worth $502 per teacher per year. Likewise, almost all national reform proposals assume "high-quality" staff development as requisite to positive change in America's classrooms (Smylie, 1988).

Staff development's transformation from policy afterthought to policy requirement represents a response on the part of the policy system to complaints of the sort that motivated the 1978 charge of neglect. Yet all of this attention and support has not fundamentally modified another 1978 complaint: Staff development efforts generally are not designed in ways

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that enable teachers' professional development. Teachers evaluate staff development efforts in much the same critical terms they did more than a decade ago—as activities planned and developed far from the school site, with insufficient relevance to their classroom practices and inadequate follow-up to permit integration of new ideas and methods into professional activities (Guskey, 1986; Little et al., 1987; Smylie, 1988). For example, while virtually all of the teachers responding to a comprehensive assessment of staff development efforts in California participated in conferences and workshops, only 1 in 6 thought these activities had any positive impact on their classroom practices (Little et al., 1987).

Our 1978 article used findings from the (then recently completed) Rand Change Agent Study[2] to examine the issue of "effective" staff development as a problem of planned change and improvement of teaching practices. In the more than ten years that have passed since the completion of that article, additional research and analyses have accumulated about staff development, planned educational change, and the factors that support or inhibit teachers' professional growth. This chapter "revisits" the 1978 analysis in light of his more recent information, experience, and thinking to examine staff development practices and policies. What factors enable and sustain teachers' professional development?

THE RAND FINDINGS

The Rand Change Agent Study examined staff development in the context of broader change efforts associated with various types of federally funded projects.[3] The study used "outcome" measures that corresponded to anticipated results of inservice education efforts and other programs of professional development. These outcomes included change in teacher practices, pupil growth, and teachers' continued use of project methods and materials following the termination of special project funding. The study also examined the influence of many process variables considered in staff development programs, such as teacher commitment to and involvement with project objectives, staff reward structures, skills training and follow-up, the role of principal and district leadership, and effects of various aspects of school climate on teachers' growth and the maintenance of changed practices. In the view of study respondents, "staff development" and "successful change" were synonymous.

The Change Agent Study identified four broad factors as crucial to the successful implementation and continuation of local planned change efforts and to staff development activities: ***institutional motivation, project implementation, institutional leadership***, and certain ***teacher characteristics.***

Institutional Motivation

Institutional motivation, or the reasons for participating in the project, had important implications for teachers' commitment and willingness to spend the effort and energy required for successful project implementation. Some districts adopted a "change agent" project as a response to high-priority, locally identified needs. Others were moved to initiate projects for other reasons—an opportunity to bring new dollars into the district, a way to relieve community pressures on the district to "do something" about disappointing student outcomes, school board interest in being "up-to-date."

Teachers' motivation for participation showed an analogous range. Teachers took part in change agent projects because they saw them as important opportunities for professional growth and exposure to new ideas, or because they were told to, or because colleagues pressured them into it, or because attractive "perks" such as extra money or time off were attached to participation.

The Change Agent Study found that a high level of initial teacher commitment had the most consistently positive relationship to all outcomes. However, we also saw that teacher commitment was not a "given" but was affected by district choices and activities. Three choices were especially critical influences on teachers' commitment and motivation: *the motivation of district managers, project planning strategies, and the scope of proposed change agent project.*

Motivation of district managers was a "signal" to teachers about how seriously to take a project and its goals. Even teachers with initial interest in a project participated only in a pro forma fashion in the face of apparent district indifference. They assumed their efforts would be neither rewarded nor supported in the long run.

The project planning strategies chosen by the district influenced teachers' commitment and motivation in two ways. The extent to which they were or were not included in decisions about project strategies and activities determined their sense of "ownership." Planning that was solely top-down alienated teachers. But planning that was totally bottom-up was no more successful in the long run because it did not include district leaders to a significant degree and so did not engender their substantive commitment and support. District-level ownership is important too!

District planning strategies that were successful in motivating and sustaining teachers' commitment and support were broad-based and involved actors from all levels of the system. Evidence from the Change Agent Study shows that *who* originated a project did not matter. What did matter was *how* project planning was carried out.

A third factor that influenced teacher enthusiasm and interest in meaningful involvement in a project was scope of project change. Somewhat counterintuitively, complex and ambitious projects were more likely to elicit teachers' excitement and active participation than were routine or limited efforts. The most potent rewards for teachers' substantive involvement in the change agent project was intrinsic—belief that they would grow professionally and their students would benefit.[4]

Project Implementation

Project implementation strategies, or local choices about how to put project methods and goals into practice, also had critical consequences for the outcomes of planned change efforts and for teachers' professional development. Most important were those local choices that determined the ways in which staff would be assisted in acquiring the new skills and information necessary to implementation—staff-development strategies.

Implementation strategies that fostered teacher learning and change had two complementary components: staff training activities and training support activities. Well-conducted staff training and support activities improved project implementation, fostered student gains, and enhanced the continuation of project methods and objectives after special funding ended. These training and support activities, by themselves, accounted for a substantial portion of observed variation in project success and continuation.

This in itself is not surprising. More interesting and important from the perspective of policy are the quite different functions played by these two elements of staff development. By themselves, skill training activities had strong, positive effects on percent of project goals achieved and on student performance. However, skill-specific training had only a small, nonsignificant effect on teacher change and on the continuation of project methods and materials.

In other words, skill-specific training influenced student gains and project implementation *only in the short run.* Skill-specific training had only transient effects because, used alone, it did not support teachers' assimilation and integration of project methods. Once the supports of the funded project operation were removed, teachers stopped using project methods because they had never really learned them in the first place. Staff support activities were necessary to sustain the gains of how-to-do-it training.

Projects used a number of activities in support of project implementation activities, most particularly classroom assistance by local resource personnel, outside consultants, project meetings, and teacher participation in project meetings. Taken together, these activities (when they were seen as useful by school staff) had a major, positive effect—as did staff training—on project outcomes. But in contrast to skill-specific training, these support activities also generated strong positive and direct effects on longer-term project outcomes—teacher change and continuation of project methods and materials. Staff support activities not only reinforced the contribution of training, they made their own important contribution to project implementation and continuation.

Concrete assistance from individuals skilled in project methods was indispensable as teachers attempted to put plans into classroom practice. For this reason, local consultants generally were judged more useful than outside consultants because they were available on an as-needed basis and because they were more likely to provide technical assistance in concrete, situational terms. External consultants, by and large, were often seen by teachers participating in change agent projects as "too abstract to be useful" and providing "a lot of generalizations and worthless theory."

Good consultants also assisted teachers in learning how to solve problems on their own. Ironically, some otherwise effective consultants unintentionally diminished project outcomes because they preempted staff learning opportunities and prevented teachers from learning to implement project strategies for themselves.

We interpreted the negative effects of external consultants as a result of both too little and too much help from consultants. Subsequent research has shown, however, that these conclusions were too skeptical about the role of external consultants in supporting local change efforts and professional development. We were a captive of our sample. By and large, the packaged programs and outside consultants we observed in the mid-1970s were ineffective. But as the NETWORK's succeeding DESSI study (Crandall & Associates, 1982)[5] and other, subsequent research has shown, externally developed programs and external consultants can be extraordinarily effective in stimulating and supporting professional growth and planned change efforts. We understand now that it is not so much the "externalness" of outside practices and experts that inhibits their effectiveness, but how they interact with the local setting.

Frequent project meetings that focused on substantive issues were another important source of support for teacher change and project continuation. These meetings provided a forum for development of clarity about project methods and objectives as well as for collegial assistance and problem solving. Project meetings were also important to successful implementation and long-term continuation because they provided an opportunity for teachers' expertise to inform project decisions and to engender the teachers' sense of "ownership." The meetings, combined with concrete assistance from consultants, were critical strategies enabling teachers to integrate project practices into the classroom, to make them "theirs."

Institutional Leadership

Institutional leadership proved to be a third important element in the successful implementation and continuation of a local change agent project. Not surprisingly, the Rand Change Agent Study found that the more effective the project director (as rated by teachers), the higher the percentage of project goals achieved and the greater the student improvement reported as a result of the project.

However, we also saw that project leadership played a short-term and circumscribed role in the outcomes of local change agent projects. Other components of district leadership were important to the longer-term project consequences. Ironically, the effectiveness of the project director had no significant relationship to project continuation or long-term teacher change.

The support and interest of central office staff were important to teacher willingness to work hard and undertake the changes in practices and beliefs assumed by the project. Principals' support also affected project implementation, but to a lesser degree. A strong project director could overcome the indifference—but typically not the active disapproval—of a principal. Few of the projects in which principals were perceived as unfavorably inclined toward the project scored well on any of the study's outcome measures. The projects with neutral or indifferent principals that scored as highly as those with supportive principals typically focused on strategies such as individualized instruction, which could be undertaken when classroom doors closed and allowed effective project directors to compensate for lukewarm principal support.

However, the attitude of the building principal was even more critical to the long-term significance of project investments and activities. The support of the principal was directly related to the likelihood that teachers would continue the project in part or in its entirety after special funding was withdrawn. The principal gives sometimes subtle but nonetheless strong messages about the legitimacy of project operations in the school—a message that teachers cannot help but receive and interpret in terms of their professional self-interest.

We also found that the *school climate* was as important as the principal as an influence on project methods and objectives once federal funding ended. The Rand data indicate that good working relationships among teachers enhanced project implementation and promoted continuation of project methods. Good working relationships and teacher participation in project decisions were correlated: The development of one fostered the development of the other.

Teacher Characteristics

Teacher characteristics—the attitudes, abilities, and experience teachers bring to a project—comprised the fourth general factor the Rand Change Agent Study found had a major influence on the outcome of change agent projects. The study collected information on several teacher attributes cited most often as significant influences on student performance and the outcomes of innovative projects: age, educational background, verbal ability, years of experience, and sense of efficacy.

The most powerful individual teacher attribute was teachers' sense of efficacy—a belief that the teacher can help even the most difficult or unmotivated students. This factor displayed a strong, positive relationship to all project outcomes. Teachers' attitudes about their own professional competence had a fundamental and critical influence on what happened as a result of planned change efforts and how effective they were, broadly considered.

To what extent is teachers' sense of efficacy simply a "given," or can it be influenced by project design choices? The Rand Study examined this question by looking at the relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and other factors measured in the study. We found that sense of efficacy was not related to years of experience or verbal ability, the other teacher characteristics that had significant effects on project outcomes. However, teachers' sense of efficacy was associated with project design. Teachers with a high sense of efficacy tended to be part of projects that placed heavy emphasis on staff development and teacher participation. Projects that involved teachers in project decision making, that provided timely and ongoing assistance in the classroom, and that had frequent staff meetings were more likely to have teachers with a high sense of efficacy than were projects that had narrowly defined goals, that had little teacher participation, or that relied heavily on the use of outside consultants for implementation.

An obvious question here is whether low-efficacy and high-efficacy teachers "selected into" different projects. Though such self-selection undoubtedly did occur to some extent, the Rand Study's fieldwork suggested that project training support activities did function to enhance teachers' sense of efficacy. They provided timely assistance to teachers and a forum in which teachers could talk through project strategies in terms of their own classrooms and thus feel confident in using a new idea. They promoted collegial encouragement and development of ownership of the project. They furnished opportunities for teachers to adapt project methods to their students and their classroom realities. In short, the Rand Change Agent Study confirmed much of the conventional wisdom about the importance of teachers' characteristics to the outcomes of a planned change effort. But the Change Agent Study also suggested ways in which project design and district leadership can influence these important factors.

NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

Two complementary strands of research undertaken since the Rand Study elaborate these conclusions and generate new understandings about professional development. While the general conception of staff development suggested by the Change Agent Study—a site-based activity supportive of teachers' efforts to identify and integrate new classroom practices—remains valid, focused examinations of *staff development practices* and current research on *teaching and learning* extend and amplify the findings of the Rand Study in critical ways.

Teaching and Learning as Co-Constructed Practice

In little more than a decade, research on teaching has moved from the relative simplicity of a process-product paradigm that relates specific teaching behaviors to specific student achievement measures (see, for example, Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Brophy & Evertson, 1974; Gage, 1978; Gage & Giaconia, 1981) to much more variegated notions of teaching and learning (see, for example, Brown, 1989; Shulman, 1987). Research on teaching has shifted from focus on isolated pedagogical behavior to consider the teaching process in terms of relationships between content and pedagogy and to examine student-teacher interactions. Current notions of "good" teaching and "effective achievement" consequently are much more complex and differ in important respects from past, simpler conceptualizations.

Process-product researchers focused on *generic* rather than subject-specific teaching skills; recent developments in research on teaching emphasize that content matters. In particular, the notion of pedagogical content knowledge places strategies for effective teaching at the intersection of subject-area content knowledge and pedagogical skills (see, e.g., Greeno, n.d.; Shulman, 1987; Stodolsky, 1988). Good teaching practice in high school algebra, for example, entails choosing materials and techniques appropriate for teaching and learning quadratic equations as well as anticipating common student errors and assessing understandings. These skills and the knowledge base that supports them are different from the skills and knowledge necessary to teach literary analysis and guide students' learning about it. However, good teaching practice in all content areas must take into account the skills, understandings, knowledge, and attitudes of the particular learners for whom a lesson is planned.

This view of teaching and learning describes teaching and learning as *co-constructed* by teachers and students in a particular classroom around a particular instructional goal on a daily basis. Consequently, "instruction" as observed in a classroom at any point in time reflects a teacher's response to many elements in the school and classroom setting—students, competing demands, instructional goals, norms and expectations, to highlight just a few. Teaching practice is *embedded* in what John Seeley Brown (1989) calls the "nowness" of the teaching context and is co-produced by teachers and students. This "reason in action" (Sockett, 1987) generates practice in the inconstant, dynamic setting of the classroom and comprises an important explanation for the variation in an individual's teaching practice over time or across classrooms.

It also treats teachers' knowledge as situated and embodied in the school context. Professional development opportunities are only one element in this noisy, active organizational setting. This observation helps explain the disappointingly low level of project continuation that the Rand Study documented for the change agent sample. Narrowly focused special projects such as those the Rand project studied are incompatible with the daily realities confronting teachers and administrators. The single-focus assumptions implicit in special projects conflict with the context of teachers' decision making and construction of practice. Further, as Fullan, Bennett, and Rolheiser-Bennett (1989) explain, the demands of special projects can actually diminish overall instructional effectiveness because "the innovation becomes the focus, rather than the holistic, organic classroom and school life . . . innovations become ends in themselves, and paradoxically, turn out to be diversions from the more basic goals of improvement" (pp. 3-4).

This view of practice as situational and constructed on a daily basis also highlights the ongoing, site- and subject-specific nature of teachers' staff development concerns. Yet most staff development efforts implicitly conceive of professional development needs as bounded and short term. To this point, Little and colleagues (1987) found that most state, regional, or local staff development efforts in California exhibit this episodic character. Further, team-oriented staff development activities—designs that recognize collective and interdependent action at the site level—were the exception.

For all of these reasons, "decontextualized" or "disembodied" and discrete professional development activities can be of only limited assistance to teachers as they confront the "nowness" of their classrooms and seek ways to improve their classroom practices. Professional development activities consistent with this view of teaching treat knowledge as situated and as embodied in the teaching context. Research on the school-level factors that influence teachers' attitudes and practices reinforces this conclusion.

Site-Level Influences on Teachers' Professional Development

Research on the context of teaching and on staff development efforts in a variety of settings moves beyond the Rand Study's focus on special projects to consider staff development in the broader context of teachers' everyday realities (e.g., Little et al., 1987; Newmann, Onosko, & Stevenson, 1988; Smylie, 1988). The Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching (CRC) at Stanford University is conducting a three-year study of teachers' workplaces and factors that affect teaching and learning in a variety of settings. Data collected at 16 diverse secondary schools in two states include survey responses, interviews, and observations. Teachers' professional growth and opportunity for professional development are a central focus of this line of research. This research and experience extends many of the central conclusions of the Rand Change Agent Study and highlights the limitations of its analysis.

The Rand Study's charge was to examine the operation and contributions of special, federally funded projects. This special-project lens illuminated the importance of school-level factors, but it did not fully capture their collective, organizational significance. Work underway under the auspices of CRC and teacher-based examinations of staff development such as that carried out in California by Little and colleagues (1987) document the need to *consider professional development in schoolwide institutional terms*. This line of research highlights a number of site-level factors as critical to the development, support, and benefit of teachers' professional development. Among the most important are

Values and norms for professional development
School-level goals for instructional practice
School-level leadership

Values and norms for professional development. The values and norms operating at the school level create the critical context for teachers'

interest in and involvement with professional development. Is the school one in which problem solving (as opposed to problem hiding) and risk taking (as opposed to perpetuation of "safe" practice) are encouraged and supported? (See McLaughlin & Yee, 1988.) Does the school frame the achievement and success of students as solely an individual teacher responsibility or as a collective responsibility of the school faculty? (See Rosenholtz, 1989.) These *norms, values and attitudes* comprise a school-level "press" for staff development and establish expectations, supports, and rewards for teachers' professional growth and reflection. For example, Little and colleagues (1987) found that

> Consistent supporters [of staff development] are more likely to receive encouragement from their peers and their administrators for their participation and more often receive encouragement and assistance in evaluating the classroom utility of what they have learned [than are those teachers who are critical of staff development activities]. (p. 83)

It is difficult for individual teachers to sustain interest in their professional development if it is not valued and encouraged within their school workplace.

School-level goals for instructional practice. Schools vary significantly in the priorities teachers express for their classroom practices. For example, the CRC's survey asked teachers to rank eight general educational goals in terms of their classroom priorities (Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching, 1989). Teachers' average rankings of their educational goals provide a "goal profile" for a school. Contours of these goal profiles reveal important qualitative differences among high schools in the CRC sample and illustrate the substantive ways in which teaching jobs differ across educational settings. The site-specific goals that motivate and shape teachers' classroom practices provide another important context for professional development. A school is not a school is not a schooll CRC field research found that, as a consequence of these school-level differences in instructional goals, teachers teaching the same subject at the same grade level in the same district express fundamentally different staff development interests and needs.

For example, a tenth-grade biology teacher working in a school serving primarily the college-bound children of university professors is eager for staff development activities that extend his laboratory repertoire and suggest new challenges for his students. A little more than two miles away, a teacher teaching nominally the same course—tenth-grade biology—is frustrated by her inability to locate appropriate materials and activities for her students, most of whom are limited-English-speaking and academically unmotivated. In contrast to her colleague down the street, she frames her staff development needs in terms of urgent need for assistance and support in working with this very different student group. Both teachers feel that staff development activities and resources provided by the district fail to meet their needs.

This site-specific perspective on staff development needs corresponds with the advice teachers have given consistently to planners and policy makers: Effective professional development efforts cannot be "generic"; they must be subject-specific and teacher-specific. Yet despite the documented importance of site-level planning for and implementation of staff development, most of the dollars and decisions associated with staff development remain centralized at the district level. For example, California teachers had a role in planning or leading *less than 10%* of all participant hours spent in staff development (see Little et al., 1987).

Little and colleagues' review of staff development activities concludes that most staff development activities are not designed in ways that can promote teachers' professional growth. Instead, centralized staff development attaches priority to separate, structured staff development activities that have little relevance to disparate groups of teachers who teach different subjects to different students at different grade levels and that "lend themselves to workshop-style presentations for large groups of teachers" (p. 69). In addition to administrative efficiency, this centralized, undifferentiated staff development also serves political ends. As a teacher comments:

> That was their easy fix because if you have people who are incompetent they say "how come I have to take the course? You say that I'm incompetent?" And the district didn't want to take that kind of pressure so they just run everybody through it. (RA02101:837-855)[6]

For these and other bureaucratic reasons, centralized staff development persists as the model of choice even though all we know about effective professional development activities and the enhancement of teachers' practice counsels against this centralized, generic strategy.

School-level leadership. CRC's research on the context of secondary school teaching and other research focused on the school as a workplace highlight not only the site-specific nature of professional development concerns, but also the multiple and critical ways in which many of the most important conditions and supports for staff development *are within the control of school leaders.*

School principals and high school department chairs are primarily responsible for establishing the norms, values, and expectations essential to consequential professional development. This normative climate is not self-creating or self-sustaining; it requires school leaders to reinforce and encourage it. One way leaders accomplish this is by establishing professional growth and problem solving as a priority for the school, and by making it "safe" for teachers to critically examine their practice and take risks.

Another way in which leadership plays an essential role is through the establishment and maintenance of the structure necessary for ongoing professional development. These structures involve ways for teachers to receive feedback about their performance and information about their students, to communicate with colleagues, and to move outside their classrooms to address issues and objectives as part of a faculty.

However, the ways in which site-level leadership creates these structures and opportunities varies by school. Within the CRC sample of schools, we have observed many different ways in which collegial interaction has been cultivated and supported. At a school confronted with the challenges of a rapidly changing student body where more than half of the students have limited English proficiency, the principal has generated an extraordinarily high level of energy, professional engagement, and collaboration through the initiation of school-level planning committees representing all academic areas as well as subject-specific concerns and has commandeered all available staff development resources for the school faculty to allocate as they see fit.[7] Teachers in this school are excited about the possibilities for growth and change as a consequence of the challenges presented by their changing student clinetele. This math teacher's assessment is typical:

> [The principal] is allowing teachers to grow and to have an input [into] changes [the school needs to make]. For example, the curriculum council, the school planning teams [have generated an] attitude that . . . now there is an opportunity to do great things, rather than [just complain about] the problems. [And change is evident.] . . . One of the good old boys on the staff said to me "maybe I need to change". We now realize that we have to change ways of presenting materials and strategies [if we are going to be effective with today's students]. (ES06901:182–207)

Another teacher at the same school stressed how his involvement on the school's planning committee had "re-motivated" him: "Maybe I was getting stagnant. It was so easy to stay back for years and not participate" (ES04001:98-108).

The attitudes and excitement of this faculty contrast starkly with those of teachers in another school facing similar challenges as a consequence of shifting student demographics. Teachers in this second school feel isolated in their efforts to develop effective responses to the students in their classrooms, feel demoralized and helpless.

These teachers *are* isolated. There is no structure for school-level communication and little or no support from school leadership for problem solving. Not surprisingly, the topic of professional development or growth seldom came up in our conversations except in a negative way.

These two schools provide dramatic illustration of the power of school-level choices and activities. Both schools operate within similar objective realities. They are approximately the same size, have a comparable resource base, and face similar challenges in terms of rapidly changing student demographics and an ethnically diverse student body. Yet these two schools comprise critically different contexts for teachers. One reflects the energy and excitement of a faculty working together to rethink their curriculum and plan strategies for responding to their changing student population. The other is a demoralized, discouraged setting where teachers look back to the "good old days" and feel ineffectual with the students who sit in their classrooms today. The primary difference between these two settings lies in school leadership and the structures established (or not) to support school-level collegiality and professional development.

We also saw that leadership of this type is not limited to the principal's office. At a third school where size makes school-level faculty meetings impractical, the department chairs have taken on the role of supporting collaboration and establishing expectations for reflection and experimentation, with the active, express support of school administration. An English teacher describes the climate of mutual support and collaboration in his department:

> It is standard, everyday practice that teachers are handing other teachers sample lessons that they've done or an assignment that they have tried and when it worked [why or if not] how they would do it differently. Or a new teacher joins the staff and instantly they're paired up with a couple of buddies who are teaching the same schedule . . . file drawers and computer disks and everything are just made readily available. And that, to me, is the only way this school knows how to function. It is quite different from the three other schools that I've taught at where it seemed like teachers did their own thing and you didn't really dare share . . . your one good idea [because] somebody else [might claim ownership]. (OV04301:260-286)

The principal supports these department level activities in a variety of ways. Last year, for example, he instituted a strategy whereby teachers could put in for a "sub day" and "get out to see what they're doing outside your department, inside your department, anywhere" (OV07701:401-410). Teachers also report that he makes a point of finding out what they are doing in the area of professional development and encouraging them in any way he can—finding relevant contacts, funds, or additional opportunities. He is seen as a "manager of opportunities" and broker for the professional life of his faculty. Teachers report that he has "high expectations" for their professional competence and development, expectations that are communicated through attention to professional opportunities and to formal and informal evaluation of classroom activities.

School-level leadership, in short, affects for better or worse the organizational conditions that enable teachers' learning and professional growth: Principals and department heads play a critical role in establishing the norms and expectations for professional growth, developing and maintaining the organizational structures that can stimulate and support it, and brokering the diverse opportunities for professional motivation and learning.

Organizational settings so designed maximize staff development resources of any variety because learning can be integrated into ongoing practices and shared with colleagues. Such a school is the organizational equivalent of the "reflective practitioner" (Schön, 1983). It has the motivation and the means to examine practices on an ongoing basis, generate feedback, and pursue strategies for improvement. It is a place where teachers see professional growth as an expectation and collegial encouragement as unquestioned. It is a setting where it is safe to examine practice critically and take risks with new instructional strategies.

A school-level perspective on professional development reveals the vulnerability of staff development efforts to the complex and mutually reinforcing conditions that operate at the school level to support or inhibit teachers' professional development objectives and activities. Staff development efforts are likely to have short-term and isolated benefits at best in the absence of school-level norms for continuous professional growth; organizational structures that provide teachers information about students, their own practices, and practices in other classrooms; norms of collective problem solving; and a shared mission (Fullan et al., 1989; McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). These are the school-level factors that enable teachers to function as learners on a continuous, not episodic, basis (Rosenholtz, 1989). But schools do not function in a vacuum; they too are influenced by the context in which they are embedded.

Supports for Site-Level Professional Development

District role in supporting staff development. This emphasis on the crucial role of the school site in fostering and promoting staff development does not mean that the district is irrelevant to the outcomes of staff development efforts, or that all district-level resources should be decentralized to the school level, as some site-based management plans demand.

However, it does call for reconsideration of the district's role. If the school is the setting that provides the motivation and support necessary for ongoing professional growth, integration of new methods into existing practice, and professional problem solving, and if the centralized models presently in place are by most accounts disappointing and ineffective, what is an effective role for the district?

In theory, the district's role should be one that enables site-level leadership and teachers to identify, address, support, and sustain professional development activities. However, few districts appear to have developed staff development activities that teachers believe fulfill that function (see, e.g., Little et al., 1987). CRC respondents in diverse settings complained that district offerings were, with few exceptions, "intellectually thin," off-mark, and insufficient in terms of follow-through.

District efforts that received high marks from teachers had two common features: they were *concrete* and they were *intensive*. Teachers in three very different districts particularly mentioned district-sponsored activities on writing and on cooperative learning as especially helpful. This teacher's description of staff development activities he found especially helpful illustrates these points:

> The Writing Seminar was very valuable to me. Very practical suggestions. Some things I could implement in my classroom immediately. The district's three-day workshop on cooperative learning also was very valuable. . . . This was a three-day intensive workshop that actually spent time showing the process, having us go through the process, and then being required . . . to go back into the classroom and do it. And this seems to be . . . what makes all the difference. There are a lot of these seminars that are put on [where] you tend to take out a lot of information but nothing really practical that you are going to implement because while you have all this stuff you never quite get the chance to process it. And then you fall back on the old ways of doing things, the familiar. (OV10601:458-491)

But equally as important as the specific staff development offerings provided by the district are the norms, values, and expectations communicated at the district level about teachers' professional development. One district in our CRC sample, Oak Valley,[8] pays deliberate attention to these often symbolic concerns and the messages about teachers' professionalism inherent in district-sponsored staff development activities. The district frames staff development activities primarily in terms of a diverse "menu" from which teachers can select activities. The opportunities for any given year are identified by a professional development committee composed of district teachers. Professional development in this district consequently is seen as planned by teachers, for teachers. And teacher attendance is voluntary: "We get to pick and choose. We are not told what we have to go to or what we need to stay away from" (OV03401:327-331). District leadership joins site-level leadership and the professional organizations in taking responsibility for managing teachers' professional development—notifying teachers of available activities or opportunities, actively seeking out appropriate activities or sources of special funding, and tailoring resources specifically for their faculty. The district is broker and stimulator of professional development opportunities.

Oak Valley district administrators stress the importance of professional vitality and professionalism in numerous ways. One mentioned most often by teachers is the evening meeting at the local country club where teachers are treated to dinner and given a sample of the professional development opportunities available to them. Both teachers and district officials saw this event as an important opportunity to "celebrate the professionalism" of teachers and to convey district priorities for and expectations about teachers' ongoing professional growth. For example:

> There are a lot of things happening districtwide that end up having an impact back on the school. Number one, I think the staff development program offered by the district is really top notch. Maybe not all the teachers here—if they have only taught in Oak Valley—don't really appreciate that. But when you go other places [to other districts or to conferences] and they hear about the variety of programs we are offered, and then the way you're treated —that you get to go to a nice place and have a presentation and then you're treated to a meal afterwards—[then you really appre-

> ciate what's here in Oak Valley]. [This makes] the people who take part in the staff development programs far more interested in being better teachers. (OV04301:110-140)

Oak Valley explicitly places teachers at the center of staff development policies and frames the district's role in terms of enabling and managing opportunities.

Teacher networks. Focusing on staff development by teachers and for teachers also points up the need to look beyond the formal policy structure and traditional arrangements for channels that can promote professional growth and stimulate teacher learning. If teachers' interests and motivations lie at the heart of successful efforts to enhance classroom practices, then the professional networks that engage teachers comprise promising vehicles for change. The reported success of such teacher groups as the Bay Area Writing Project, the Puget Sound Educational Consortium, or the Urban Math Collaborative suggests that professional development activities rooted in the natural networks of teachers—in their professional associations—may be more effective than strategies that adhere solely to a delivery structure outlined by the formal policy system (see, e.g., Puget Sound Educational Consortium, 1989). As Oak Valley's experience demonstrates, staff development policies that engage the natural networks of teachers can support development efforts in a more sustained fashion. Further, since teachers rather than policies are responsible for integrating new practices with traditional routines, it is possible to acknowledge the systemic nature of professional development needs and the constructed, fluid quality of classroom practice.

ENABLING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Taken together, the earlier Rand Study findings and the new understandings derived from more recent examinations of teaching and staff development suggest a strategic reframing of policies to stimulate and support professional development. Many staff development policies are conceived in terms of removing or buffering the *constraints* to teachers' professional growth and effective practice—inadequate materials, insufficient information, lack of appropriate teacher preparation, missing teacher voice in staff development decisions, to cite a few. However, an important lesson from the Rand Study, the CRC work, and other experience is that removing constraints or obstacles to professional growth does not ensure more effective practice or professional vitality. A teacher with new information about how to do better in the classroom does not necessarily apply or sustain it. This body of research shows that neither teachers' sense of efficacy nor classroom practices are significantly enhanced by these decontextualized "inputs."

Other and often substantively different factors are required to *enable* improvement and professional development. The factors that the Rand Change Agent Study found to be associated with effective planned change efforts, effective staff development, and teachers' positive sense of efficacy all function to enable teachers' efforts to change—such as ongoing assistance, structures that promote collegiality, concrete training and follow-through, and principal support and encouragement. And the school and district factors that have been seen to enable professional development—managing multiple, diverse opportunities; creating and supporting norms and expectations for professional growth; developing and nurturing structures for communication, collegiality, and feedback; defining a central role for teachers—are not amenable to direct policy "fixes" because they do not operate consistently or singly across settings.

A focus on enabling professional development *within existing constraints* denotes a fundamentally different policy perspective than that which has guided past practice. It highlights the conditional, mutually reinforcing, and contextual nature of factors that support professional development. It underscores the embedded nature of the education system and how the policies at one level—state, district, or school—can enable (or constrain) the efforts of actors at the next.

Thinking of professional development as a problem of enabling teachers' learning and continued professional vitality focuses attention on the organizational conditions of individual development and the critical consequences of school-level choices. Explanations of why—within the same district—some schools are "dead" and others are charged with energy and excitement lie in site-level strategies to engage teachers in learning and development *in the context* of their particular classroom settings. These site-level strategies are reinforced and enhanced by district-level or teacher-based policies that acknowledge the need for site- or teacher-specific professional development opportunities, convey high expectations and support for teachers' professionalism, and exploit the strengths of teachers' networks and professional affiliations. These are the factors that enable and sustain teachers' professional growth and feelings of efficacy in the classroom.

NOTES

1. I use the terms *staff development* and *professional development* interchangeably. Staff development reflected the language of the 1970s; professional development captures better the objectives and conceptualizations of the 1990s.

2. From 1973 through 1978, the Rand Corporation carried out, under the sponsorship of the United States Office of Education, a national study of federally funded programs intended to introduce and support innovative practices in the public schools. Rand's four-year, two-phase study examined a sample of 293 local projects funded by four federal programs (Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA], Title VII of ESEA, innovative programs funded by the 1968 Vocational Education Act, and Right-to-Read). Findings of the study were reported in eight volumes under the general title *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change*. A summary analysis of the study is contained in Berman and McLaughlin (1978).

3. This section draws substantially from McLaughlin and Marsh (1978). Readers interested in more details of the analysis summarized in this section should consult the original article or Berman and McLaughlin (1978).

4. Certain "extrinsic rewards," we found, actually were negatively related to project outcomes. In particular, teachers who received extra pay for training (about 60% of the sample) were *less* likely than others to report a high percentage of project goals achieved. These teachers also reported less improvement in student performance, especially academic performance, than did other teachers in the study. A number of project directors commented that although teachers appreciated the extra pay, the pay alone did not induce teachers to learn new skills in the absence of professional motivation. To this point, a teacher remarked, "I'll go [to the training session], and I'll collect my $30, but I don't have to listen."

5. The DESSI study examined a national sample of the next generation of change agent projects. In their design and strategies of support, these projects incorporated many of the lessons from the antecedent planned change efforts that comprised the Rand sample.

6. Here and elsewhere, quotations from respondents are identified by their file code and the interview lines from which the text is taken. These interviews are part of a public-use file that will be made available to interested researchers at the end of the CRC's grant period.

7. This school's relatively high ranking of inservice activities as "helpful" was puzzling to us because other schools in the same district had uniformly rated district staff development activities as not helpful. When we asked teachers in this school to help us understand this anomalous survey outcome, they said they gave positive scores to their inservice because they "did it themselves" and organized it all at the school level.

8. "Oak Valley" is a pseudonym. The identities of districts participating in the CRC research are confidential.

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