A composite model of exemplary inservice education, derived from a selection of comprehensive sources and basic references in the field, is described. In examining best practice statements, differentiation was made between three domains of inservice. The procedural domain includes chiefly political questions of control, support, and delivery of inservice activities. Within the substantive domain, criteria for deciding issues are technical (In what manner and sequence will needed skills be taught?). Philosophical questions lie within the conceptual domain (What are the purposes of inservice education?). Discussion is presented of the areas within each of these domains where researchers and practitioners have reached a consensus of the best practices for designing, developing, and delivering successful inservice programs. Under the procedural domain, best practices statements prescribe that: (1) Decision-making should be an authentic collaboration of inservice clients, providers, and relevant constituencies; (2) Incentives for participating in inservice programs should emphasize intrinsic professional rewards; (3) Inservice programs should be explicitly supported at the outset by district and building administrators; (4) Outside agencies/consultants may be helpful in support roles; (5) Implementation strategies should include continual professional growth activities and the local development of materials within a framework of collaborative planning; (6) The design of inservice programs should be complex and ambitious; (7) Inservice programs should be planned in response to assessed needs; (8) Inservice trainers should be competent; (9) The school site should be the locus of inservice activities; and (10) The evaluation of inservice should be a collaborative venture whose primary purpose is to assist with planning and implementing programs. Best practices in the substantive domain stated that: (1) The content of inservice should be derived from assessed needs; (2) Inservice content should be directed toward changing teaching, not student behavior; and (3) The process of inservice education should be collaborative.
INService Best Practices: The Learnings of General Education

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Inservice Best Practices:
The Learnings of General Education

The general education literature on inservice is vast and yet surprisingly convergent. There is near-unanimous agreement that, a) the current status of inservice practice is deplorable, b) hard research in inservice is meager, c) broad-based conceptualizations of inservice are lacking, and d) the very meaning of the word "inservice" is problematic. But there also exists substantial agreement as to what constitutes several "best practices" of inservice education. For example, few would take issue with the proposition that it is important to involve the clients of inservice in planning their own programs. This proposition or statement of a best practice is well supported in the empirical research on educational change.¹ Other best practice statements, perhaps equally prudent, can be gleaned from the non-empirical literature. What follows is an attempt to describe a composite model of exemplary inservice education derived from a selection of comprehensive sources and basic references in the field.

The method used to draw inferences and reach generalizations about inservice was a crude form of "meta-analysis," to use Glass' phrase.² That is, an analysis of analyses was conducted in order to integrate findings. The criteria used to decide on a best practice statement were empirical support, cogency of argument, and repetition.
of mention in the literature. The result of this process is a consensual listing arranged thematically that represents, at least to a degree, best thinking about best practices.

Sources included the following among others: major studies of educational change sponsored by RAND and the National Center for Educational Statistics and the National Teacher Corps; a summary of inservice teacher education sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics and the National Teacher Corps; recent state-of-the-art analyses of research in inservice, instruction, curriculum, postsecondary education, and school politics; recent collections of writings about inservice representing diverse points-of-view; position statements of teachers' unions; reports supported or released by state education agencies; plus illustrations of experimental situations and consensus reports of working groups. In essence, an attempt was made to survey a reasonable selection of the most current and authoritative literature available.

For heuristic purposes, and in order to arrange best practice statements in some logical configuration, it is useful to differentiate three domains of inservice, the procedural, the substantive, and the conceptual. (See Figure 1.) Each domain entertains distinct questions to be decided in particular ways according to specific criteria, though it is clear that each is grounded in the others. The procedural domain includes chiefly political questions of control, support, and delivery of inservice activities, and it relies upon negotiation in order to achieve consensus. Procedural questions such as when should inservice
activities take place, are political because they require an allocation of resources. An example of a substantive question, on the other hand, is how should inservice sessions be taught? Within the substantive domain, the criteria for deciding issues are technical. Deciding in what manner and sequence to teach needed skills is, after all, a problem requiring considerable technical expertise. Within the conceptual domain, the questions are more philosophical. What are the purposes of inservice education? Logical reasoning is needed to answer conceptual questions in a manner that is cogent, clear and consistent.

Certainly one best practice in inservice is to match problems with appropriate problem-solving strategies. If for example the question at hand is what should be taught in an inservice program addressing the needs of regular educators who serve handicapped children -- a substantive issue -- then the political question of whether or not a full-time teacher should deliver the program is irrelevant. Technical expertise is called for in this instance, not political support. Similarly, conceptual questions concerning the coherence of statewide inservice policies cannot be decided by substantive expertise alone. Again, there are appropriate and there are inappropriate ways to try to solve problems. Confusion on this point has served to exacerbate difficulties in all three domains of inservice.

Within each domain, one or several statements of best practice, usually phrased in the form of prescriptions, are presented for various functions. Each statement is corroborated in the literature under review; however, citations are listed only for representative points raised in support or by way of explanation.


Figure 1: The Three Domains of Inservice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedural Domain</th>
<th>Substantive Domain</th>
<th>Conceptual Domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What sorts of questions are entertained?</td>
<td>political</td>
<td>technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are these questions decided?</td>
<td>by negotiation among parties to achieve a reasonable consensus</td>
<td>by expertise derived from empirical research and practical experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are &quot;best&quot; criteria for evaluation?</td>
<td>such as these: openness, fairness, accountability</td>
<td>such as these: effectiveness, adequacy, relevancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the &quot;ideal type&quot;?</td>
<td>a democratic context for inservice</td>
<td>a sound inservice program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>strategies for controlling, supporting, and delivering inservice</td>
<td>the process and content of inservice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Practices in the Procedural Domain

**Control Function.** Inservice is a power issue for teachers; thus, the procedural function of control looms large in the literature. The question of who is responsible for inservice teacher education remains open. But because no single group controls the inservice education
of teachers, control is described in terms of parity in decision-making, the sharing of resources, and cooperation to achieve common ends. The password in discussions of inservice control, it seems, is "collaboration."

I. Decision-making should proceed as an authentic collaboration of inservice clients, providers and relevant constituencies. The corollaries to this prescription are that decision-making should involve all those affected by inservice decisions and be as close to their situations as possible, and that decision-making should represent the shared interests of agencies and major interest groups.

There are two clusters of support for this statement of best practice. First, the inservice education of teachers cannot reasonably be expected to come under the control of any one group, and so collaboration in some form is likely to become the standard means to arrive at reasonable consensus. As far as teachers' organizations are concerned, an open-ended demand for teacher-control of inservice would be incompatible with, (among other principles) the legal precedents emerging from the right-to-a-suitable-education litigation for handicapped and other students. With regard to institutions of higher education, there would appear to be a fundamental conflict between the academic role of the university and the rightful needs of public schools for inservice programs. Neither is it likely that state and federal bureaucracies will take control of inservice, for, to reapply the thinking of De Tocqueville, the functions of education in a federal system may be centrally overseen but not centrally administered, or
at least not successfully. 20

Second, sound educational reasons exist to collaborate in decision-making, among them: to improve the quality of inservice by gaining multiple perspectives, to increase participants' sense of ownership, to create a climate in which joint planning and operating are encouraged, to enlarge the circle of participants, to reinforce the notion that decisions ought to be made on the basis of competence rather than position, and so on. 21

Support Function. The general education literature adequately recognizes the commonplace that inservice costs money. Materials, release-time, a professional development center -- in some cases these and other expenses may be prerequisites for effective inservice programming. The problem is that inservice remains everyone's issue and no one's priority. Money committed to inservice is usually paltry, but then this is not due to any inherent legal or administrative constraints. Alternative forms of collaborative funding that do not violate the authority of local education agencies appear to be possible. 22 For certain, a best practice in inservice is that inservice programs should be adequately supported, preferable with long-term, hard money. But other, supportive factors, not necessarily costing money, may just as readily spell success (or failure) for inservice.

II. A. The incentives for participating in inservice programs should emphasize intrinsic professional rewards. The corollary to this is that there should not be disincentives: inconvenient times or locations or other factors that would penalize participation.
The research literature does not support the notion that extrinsic rewards such as extra salary credit, extra pay and so on, will induce teachers to work hard planning or participating in inservice programs if professional motivation is absent. The effective implementation of inservice requires, in a word, human support -- personal contact and interaction among clients, planners, providers and consultants, and the growth of a professional supportive culture.

II. B. Inservice programs should be explicitly supported at the outset by district and building administrators.

Although teachers work best with their peers in planning and sharing activities, the attitudes of principals and superintendents are important to the success of their work. Involvement in inservice requires extra effort on the part of teachers who need to feel that their contributions are recognized and appreciated by administrators. Thus formal institutional backing, very early on, is required to legitimate teachers' efforts and to coordinate teachers' plans.

II. C. Outside agencies/consultants may be helpful in supportive roles. A corollary is that outside agencies/consultants should offer neither too much nor too little help.

The purpose of consultant work is to help teachers adapt, not adopt innovations, and to help them learn how to solve problems rather than solve their problems for them. One way to structure consultations in a manner helpful to teachers is the "advisory approach" whereby consultation is made only at the request of a teacher, it is limited to the teacher's expressed needs, and it takes place at school during school hours. A second way for consultants and their agencies to be helpful is to organize and operate statewide dissemination systems of
information pertinent to the planning and delivery of inservice. A third option is for consultants to help form temporary task forces of inservice planners in local school districts and then to make their services available directly to the task forces as needed. 

**Delivery Function.** The effective delivery of inservice requires that specific attention be directed to implementation strategies, to design issues, to the principle of assessing needs, to staff and site questions, and to the problem of evaluation. The general education literature has a great deal to say about each of these procedural issues, and there is a fair amount of agreement as to what constitutes best practices. As is the case in current discussions of control and support functions, collaboration is a fundamental concept.

**III. A.** The implementation strategy should include continual professional growth activities and the local development of materials, within a framework of collaborative planning by participants.

The idea behind locally developed materials, be they teachers' guides or instruments to monitor interaction in classrooms or whatever, is less to "reinvent the wheel" than to furnish an impetus for modifying and adjusting materials and programs. So too with continual training and support activities -- each instance of interaction provides an occasion for collegial sharing. Inservice problems are never really "solved," after all. The perceptions and priorities of people working together in schools shift according to changing conditions. The collaborative planning of implementation strategies
is thus a viable response to a situation in flux.

III. B. The design of inservice programs should be complex and ambitious. A corollary is that inservice goals should be clear and specific.

At least two reasons have been advanced in support of ambitiousness and complexity. First, such projects are not likely to be trivial and routine. If successful, they promise to have an impact. Second, bold projects are more likely to appeal to participants (and so to offer intrinsic rewards) than are more modest designs that may suffer from association with that which has been tried in the past.

The dilemma is that complex, ambitious inservice designs, though they promise more, are more difficult to carry off. Conceptual clarity about the goals of an inservice plan to be achieved during implementation and as a result of collaborative planning can increase the likelihood that the goals will be achieved.

III. C. Inservice programs should be planned in response to assessed needs. A corollary is the interests and strengths of participants should also be assessed.

There is no quarrel with the idea that the needs, interests and strengths of participants should be assessed in planning inservice activities. Further, there is empirical backing for the idea that programs should be congruent with identified needs. The knotty problem is, whose needs should be assessed, and how? Should the needs of students, staff or programs be given priority? And what constitutes best practices in inservice? At present, there are no consensual answers to these questions, few models, and little evidence.
III. D. **Inservice trainers should be competent.** The corollary is that each person is often her/his own most competent trainer.

The question as to who should deliver inservice is now a loaded one, and as a result some groups have taken doctrinaire positions. Research indicates that teachers themselves or other practicing teachers are more successful leaders and trainers than are administrators or university professors. But the core issue remains competence, not position.

III. E. **The school site should be the locus of inservice activities.**

Of course the exact nature of planned activities should be the determinant of location, but for most purposes the school site has the distinct advantage of being "job-embedded." At school, teachers, the environments of teaching, and inservice training can achieve a practical unity. Furthermore, teachers generally prefer to have inservice activities conducted at school, on school time. As far as planning is concerned, on the other hand, there may be distinct advantages to moving off-site in order to gain perspective or just to escape the "dailiness" of school.

III. F. **The evaluation of inservice should be a collaborative venture whose primary purpose is to assist with planning and implementing programs.**

There is a large and growing literature on educational evaluation, and there are more than several schools of thought. One set of guidelines for the evaluation of staff development programs, as syncretic as any, suggests that evaluation be ongoing, public and explicit.
unobtrusive, comprehensive, and informed by multiple sources and varieties of data. That evaluation should be helpful to planning and implementing programs is not open to question. Neither is there a responsible objection to seeing evaluation as a shared activity. The logic of collaborative working arrangements requires collaborative techniques with which to evaluate.

Best Practices in the Substantive Domain

The focus of general education is the procedural domain, not the substantive. Topics concerning the control, support and delivery of inservice appear more frequently in the literature than do topics related to content or process, and they are treated in finer detail. Clearly, the substantive needs of general educators are so diverse that it is impossible for them to be addressed comprehensively in general writings about inservice. But there are other reasons as well to explain why the substantive domain is slighted. For one, substance is simply not as provocative as procedure. An issue concerning the political power dimensions of inservice is more likely to spark controversy and be discussed at length than is a problem having to do with, say, instructional methods for adult learners.

Second, the emphasis on procedural issues reflects current themes in education as a whole. It is widely held by those who want to reform education in some fundamental way that the greatest problem is control by self-serving elites, bureaucracies, or professionals. The solution is assumed to be more democratic forms of governance—give the clients of educational systems, the students, parents and citizens, more
A similar argument exists vis-a-vis inservice, in that now the clients-teachers are demanding more power. Increased collaboration is the slogan.

A comparison of general educational writing and thinking with that of special education is instructive. In special education, the substance of inservice is less at issue partly because substantive prescriptions are embedded in law. The content of special education inservice is bound to include due process, comprehensive planning, IEP's, and other items included in P.L. 94-142, for some years to come. Furthermore, there exists considerable consensus within the field of special education concerning the value of diagnostic-prescriptive teaching. As for general education, however, there is neither consensus nor legal mandate (except, perhaps, in minimal competency legislation). For these reasons, therefore, it is difficult to come by best practice statements in the substantive domain that achieve much specificity.

Content Dimension. The literature reveals an emerging theme having to do with inservice content and the growing recognition of a curricular truism. The theme is that curriculum development and inservice education are by nature so well matched that great things could come from a permanent union. One recent volume fairly bubbles with enthusiasm for the "breakaway" idea of integrating the two. 37

The truism is that if Spanish is being taught you won't learn French. Or, the content of inservice will affect the outcomes. If problem-solving skills are not made a part of inservice activities, then it is unreasonable to expect that the activities will help teachers solve problems. This is an obvious point, but one often
obscured in talk about procedures. Content does indeed matter in inservice education, and it deserves more attention.

IV. A. The content of inservice should be derived from assessed needs. A corollary is that problem-solving skills are likely to be a needed content dimension of inservice.

The idea of problem-solving skills as a needed content is justified on two levels. On a first level, the learning style of many teachers is probably more like problem-solving than anything else, and so the wisdom of teaching such skills is apparent. On another level, the skills many teachers use in teaching are themselves problem-solving competencies such as planning, classroom decision-making, the analysis of classroom transactions, and action research. The advantage of inservice content that emphasizes problem-solving is thus its congruence with professional learning/teaching styles.

IV. B. Inservice content should be directed toward changing teaching, not student behavior.

This prescription has empirical warrant as well as logical consistency. Inservice education is for professional staff members, not students. The content of inservice should be designed for those most directly involved—the teachers—and it should be evaluated accordingly. And yet there remains a nagging question, largely unexplored in the literature, that must be appended, namely, how does inservice affect changes in children? The conceptual issue is therefore, who should be the ultimate beneficiaries of inservice?

Process Dimension. Prescriptions in the process dimension of inservice must be tempered by the finding of Lawrence et al. that "no medium of
instruction is broadly inappropriate or distinctly inferior in the accomplishment of the objectives of inservice education." A recent review of the research in teaching, however, has drawn several inferences as to how to achieve greatest achievement. A significant insight is that teachers should maximize the time for academic learning and minimize time wasted in maintenance tasks. The implication for teaching/training in inservice education is obvious.

V. The process of inservice education should model good teaching.

A number of good teaching models have been explicated in the literature, each having different characteristics and purposes; the common prescription is to use them appropriately. The inservice literature, drawing from adult learning theory, is more explicit in its recommendations. To "model good teaching" in inservice is coming to mean the following: encourage active learning, use self-instructional methods, allow great freedom of choice, involve demonstrations, supervised trials and feedback, and be adaptive to the real life conditions of adults.

Best Practices in the Conceptual Domain

There are those who take the synoptic position that what is needed most of all in inservice education is a more adequate conceptualization, better theory, and a more accommodating rationale. Others take a different stance, arguing that theory is inherently unable to provide definitive programs and that what is most needed are tentative strategies. Consensus on the role of theory in inservice education is not likely. What consensus there is within the conceptual domain is related to two fundamental concepts.
VI. A. Inservice education should follow a developmental, not a deficit model.

The developmental model of inservice education is one where teachers are seen as being skilled professionals who bring unique abilities and positive attitudes to inservice. Teachers are not seen as needing inservice training because they lack the necessary skills to do an effective job. The developmental assumption is that teachers need not be weak in order to become stronger. Unfortunately, the developmental model is not widely enough accepted nor understood by non-teachers even though its truth is simple and undeniable: people try to perform up (or down) to expectations.

VI. B. Inservice should be an integral part of the total school program.

Support for this prescription is strong: Inservice should be "linked to a general effort of the school" rather than being a "single-shot," according to one review. Inservice should be "continuous" in the view of the AFT. It should be "the core of effective professional practice," and "an essential element of the educational process," according to others. Few writers or researchers will deny that this statement is a best practice concept, but even fewer point to situations where it has been wholeheartedly acted upon.
Figure 2: Fifteen Best Practices in Inservice Education

1. Decision-making should proceed as an authentic collaboration of inservice clients, providers and relevant constituencies.
   Corollary: Decision-making should involve all those affected by inservice decisions and be as close to their situations as possible.
   Corollary: Decision-making should represent the shared interests of agencies and major interest groups.

2. The incentives for participating in inservice programs should emphasize intrinsic professional rewards.
   Corollary: There should not be disincentives—unconvenient times or locations or other factors that would penalize participation.

3. Inservice programs should be explicitly supported at the outset by district and building administrators.

4. Outside agencies/consultants may be helpful in supportive roles.
   Corollary: Outside agencies/consultants should offer neither too much nor too little help.

5. The implementation strategy should include continual professional growth activities and the local development of materials, within a framework of collaborative planning by participants.

6. The design of inservice programs should be complex and ambitious.
   Corollary: Inservice goals should be clear and specific.

7. Inservice programs should be planned in response to assessed needs.
   Corollary: The interests and strengths of participants should also be assessed.
8. Inservice trainers should be competent.
   Corollary: Each person is often her/his own most competent trainer.

9. The school site should be the locus of inservice activities.

10. The evaluation of inservice should be a collaborative venture whose primary purpose is to assist with planning and implementing programs.

11. The content of inservice should be derived from assessed needs.
   Corollary: Problem-solving skills are likely to be a needed content dimension of inservice.

12. Inservice content should be directed toward changing teaching, not student behavior.

13. The process of inservice education should model good teaching.

14. Inservice education should follow a developmental, not a deficit model.

15. Inservice should be an integral part of the total school program.

Conclusion

An obvious conclusion to be drawn from a review of general education writings about inservice is that real examples of best practice are harder to come by than statements of best practice. For those of us who plan and deliver inservice programs, our main task continues to be one of praxis—applying supportable principles to the practice of professional development.

A second conclusion, no less important, is that the procedural, substantive and conceptual domains of inservice need to be understood in order to fit practice to problems. To insist that 51% of an inservice planning committee be classroom teachers when the problem at hand is one of finding suitable self-instructional materials, can confuse issues and block solutions.

But just as there can be teaching without learning, there can be inservice without professional development. All three domains must be properly aligned or inservice will surely fail. Each domain is integral to effective inservice, for fundamental political, technical and philosophical issues are raised. Thus, in the last analysis, the task of inservice providers is one of synthesis.
FOOTNOTES


7 Paul.


This is also a question of procedure versus substance, and thus there is a further problem. Does changing the people who make decisions make a difference in the quality of decisions that are made? Teachers' advocates think it does, and they argue for more direct control of inservice activities by teachers themselves. Cohen, for one, is challenging that way of thinking. "There is no evidence that attending to procedure is more effective in achieving social goals than attending to substance." Cohen, p. 430.


See Ian Westbury, "In-Service Education: Some Ruminations from the Firing Line," Rubin, pp. 266-74.

See Clark.


Joyce, Issues, p. 10.

Ibid., p. 20; and McLaughlin and Marsh, p. 75.

Fullan and Pomfret, p. 391; and Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller, "The Social Realities of Teaching," Teachers College Record, LXXX, No. 1 (September, 1978) 68.

Paul, p. 40; and McLaughlin and Marsh, pp. 72-73.


Note that task forces and statewide dissemination systems are important elements in the National Inservice Network model of consultation and inservice planning.

Paul, p. 52.

McLaughlin and Marsh, p. 75.

Ibid., pp. 79-80.

Paul, p. 46.
The "discrepancy model" of needs assessment, where "need" is defined as the distance between an ideal or desired state of function and present performance, has recently come under fire as being misguided. See Michael Scriven and Jane Roth, "Need Assessment: Concept and Practice," New Directions for Program Evaluation, I (Spring, 1978), 1-11.

Lawrence, pp. 11-12.

Nicholson, pp. 6-9.


Cohen, p. 430.

Edelfelt and Smith.

McLaughlin and Marsh, p. 87.


Lawrence, p. 13.

Ibid., p. 10.

Gage.


Lawrence, p. 15.

Nicholson, p. 41.
48 Leiter and Cooper, p. 107.