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AUTHOR Patterson, Janice H.
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ABSTRACT

This study reviewed literature on Professional Development Schools (PDSs) relevant to outcomes for teacher education programs and the students they serve. It also examined the philosophy and defined common objectives of PDSs. The study consulted education databases and analyzed papers collected at national meetings. Data analysis indicates that PDS-educated teachers are more prepared for working in the schools, more immersed in school life, and more confident in their knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter and understanding of diversity than are their traditionally educated peers. Results suggest that PDS preparation may diminish the dropout rate for beginning teachers. Those educated in urban environments are more sensitive to ethnic/linguistic diversity and more likely to select a teaching position in an urban school. PDS partnerships report collaboration in the development and teaching of the college curriculum and the supervision of preservice teachers. (Contains 21 references.) (SM)

Impact of Professional Development Schools on Teacher Education

Janice H. Patterson

University of Alabama at Birmingham

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This study was supported by the School of Education, University of Alabama at Birmingham and by a grant from the BellSouth Foundation. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Janice H. Patterson, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, School of Education, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 112 Education Building, 901 13th Street South, Birmingham, Alabama 35294-1250. Electronic mail may be sent via Internet to <JanPat@uab.edu>.

Abstract

Professional development schools (PDSs) are school and university partnerships designed to re-create teacher education. This article reviews literature on PDSs relevant to outcomes for teacher education programs and the students they serve. It also describes the philosophy and defines common objectives. Results indicate that PDS educated teachers are immersed in schools and more confident in their knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter than their traditionally educated peers. Those educated in urban environments are more sensitive to ethnic/linguistic diversity and likely to select a teaching position in an urban school. PDS partnerships report collaboration in the development and teaching of the college curriculum and the supervision of pre-service teachers.

The Impact of Professional Development Schools on Preservice Teacher Education

Introduction

In *Tomorrow's Teachers*, the Holmes Group (1986) brought the term "*professional development schools*" to the consciousness of America's educators. Professional development sites share common objectives (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1997): preservice teacher preparation, staff development of teachers and other school based educators, applied research designed to improve student learning and staff development, and support to maximize student learning.

Underlying the notion of professional development sites are three basic assumptions. First, professional development for teachers will result in improved learning for students. Second, teachers' professional development is a career-long continuum that begins at the preservice level and continues through the last stages of a teaching career. Third, teachers' professional development and school development must go hand in hand. It is difficult to have one without the other (Watson & Fullan, 1992, p. 213).

The role of professional development sites in educating potential teachers is often compared to that of teaching hospitals in educating new physicians and in providing rigorous education. In a history of American medicine, Ludmerer (1985) describes the influence of Dewey's thinking on Abraham Flexner's conceptualization of the teaching hospital in the reform of medical education. The importance of teaching and learning in clinical settings and the importance of the link between research and practice derive from Dewey's conception of the role of knowledge, experience and practice in the development of the thinking individual. A "thinking" individual is defined as one who can analyze, synthesize, and make knowledge-based decisions and has the skills to carry them out (Dewey, 1904/1974). The ideals at the heart of the

progressive movement in education during Dewey's era –" an abiding commitment to universal education and a profound faith in the average classroom teacher" (Cremin, 1961, p. 299) undergird today's professional development sites.

The daily operations of a professional development site vary in terms of content and structure (Ziechner & Miller, 1997; Houston Et al.., 1995; Lemlech, Et al.., 1994). One example of the design comes from the partnership between the Birmingham (Alabama) City Schools and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Twelve faculty members from a local elementary school and five faculty members from UAB formed a unique partnership in August 1998. The goal of the project was to provide teacher preparation coursework and fieldwork at Avondale in three consecutive academic terms. A nine-hour term of student teaching followed. Sixteen preservice teachers were blocked for teacher preparation methods courses. Teacher education methods courses were taught on site during the terms. Preservice teachers were immersed into the everyday curriculum and instruction in classrooms. See Christensen, Hester et al.. (1999) for a fuller description.

In the mid-1990s over 600 public or private institutions reported being involved in a partnership activity, or PDS, to support teacher education (Abdal-Haqq, 1998, p 7). As other institutions consider such a move, it is important to know the effects of PDSs on teacher education programs and the students enrolled in those programs. For the purposes of this paper, the key question is "What are the results of using professional development schools as a context for teacher education?"

Method

The question above served as the critical lens in reviewing existing literature on PDSs. Education data bases were consulted, papers collected at national meetings and analyzed. It

should also be noted that additional data were available through a variety of informal mechanisims, including the use of the Internet. This analysis does not include anything published after 1999.

Descriptive studies continue to dominate the PDS literature. Although many authors point to the need for evaluation, quantitative or empirical studies, others argue that the complex nature of PDSs can best be captured with a qualitative approach. The bottom line is that those who seek quantitative data are sometimes frustrated.

Results

Significant changes are taking place in both the substance and structure of teacher education within PDSs when compared with traditional programs. Trachtman (1996) reported that preservice teachers were engaged in research about practice at more than 75% of the 28 sites she investigated. Coursework was taught at the PDS school in more than 90% of the sites and was facilitated by either school or university faculty. In more than 50% of the cases, school faculty were given university appointments and collaboratively planned teacher education curriculum in more than 80% of the 28 sites. Abdal-Haqq (1998, p. 13) concurred and identified these key findings on effects of PDS based education programs for preservice teachers:

- Incorporated earlier, longer and more structured clinical experiences
- Were more likely to be a fifth year, postbaccalaureate program
- Depended on the involvement of school based teachers in the design and implementation of coursework and field experiences,
- Provided more frequent and sustained supervision and feedback
- Exposed children to more diverse, authentic learning experiences, and

- Used more varied assessment strategies, including portfolios and other "authentic" assessments
- Intended to be more supportive, reflective and empowering
- Coursework was likely to be co-developed by school and university faculty, taught on-site and linked to the school context in which it is taught (Hayes & Wetherill, 1996).

In the studies reviewed for this work, preservice teachers learned more in PDS settings than their counterparts in traditional student teaching placements and made greater contributions to the school community. They were more likely to be involved in extracurricular activity, more immersed in the school community and more likely to establish relationships with community members outside the school settings (Wiseman & Cooper, 1996). They also had a tendency to enhance the school community in other ways: substituting to free the classroom teachers for other PDS activities (Christensen, Pierce et al., 1999) and tutoring children after school (Houston et al., 1995). Typically, interns were placed in cohorts and assigned to classrooms in teams (Hausfather, Outlaw & Strehle, 1996). Further selection criteria for cooperating teachers and interns were more strenuous than in traditional teacher education programs (Hayes & Wetherill, 1996).

Although the current attrition rate during the first three years of teaching is about 30%, research by Hayes & Wetherill indicates that PDSs may diminsh the dropout rate for beginning teachers(Hayes & Wetherill, 1996). In a partnership between East Carolina University and Pitt County, N.C. schools, Hayes & Wetherill reported that after five years, almost 98% of PDS trained graduates remained in the classroom. Interns trained in PDSs reported that they are better equipped to serve ethnically and linguistically diverse student bodies than student teachers in traditional settings. PDS trained interns were more likely to want jobs in urban environments when their practica stressed work in these areas (Arends & Winitzky, 1996). The high turnover

rate and associated costs of hiring new teachers every year in many urban districts make this finding significant.

On a broader scale, PDS trained teachers reported themselves as more confident about their knowledge of both substantive and pedagogical knowledge and therefore felt less "culture shock" when they became classroom teachers than teachers trained in traditional teacher education programs (Book, 1996). A teacher involved in the partnership with the University of Alabama at Birmingham described the student interns' experiences:

> Students had the opportunity to see what may have previously been merely text or spoken words. Now it was real and in a real life setting. They saw immediately that one can plan a great lesson and have all the necessary resources, but must teach around the everyday obstacle course of real human subjects. Classroom management difficulties, daily interruptions, discipline problems, or students of different learning abilities can swiftly destroy a terrific lesson plan. This was clearly different from walking into a classroom for one hour, setting up a lesson, and then leaving, as was done for most methodology classes (Christensen, Pierce et al.., p. 21, 1999).

Other important findings on the education of preservice teachers in PDS settings comes from work supported by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Trachtman (1996) studied 28 professional development sites as part of the Professional Development School Standards Project. She used survey research to investigate goals set by participants, processes used to meet the goals, progress in meeting their goals, and supports and constraints. Sixty-five percent of the respondents believed that preservice teachers spent more time in classrooms in PDSs than in traditional programs; eighty five percent of the respondents agreed that preservice teachers worked more with school based teams in areas such as curriculum

development, performance assessment, and action research. This study clearly documents that preservice teachers in PDS environments were perceived as a school-wide responsibility, not just belonging to one teacher, and that they were baptized in the daily life of the school. They added value to the school by assisting children and relieving teachers to engage in critical PDS activities.

Anecdotal evidence revealed that graduates appeared to start their teaching careers with a greater sense of efficacy than those trained in a traditional teacher education program; they "hit the ground running" (Hayes & Wetherill, 1996). Respondents perceived that they had a greater understanding of linguistic and ethnic diversity. They also believed that they were more committed to teaching and students. Finally, they saw themselves as more likely to reach out to others and participate in school-wide activities than their peers in traditional environments.

A study by Long (1996) of interns at the Teachers College of Emporia State University revealed that PDS graduates start their careers with a greater sense of efficacy. PDS intern results were compared to a control group who were completing the traditional campus-based program during the same time. Methods of evaluation included the National Teacher Examination Professional Knowledge Test, research questionnaires, portfolios and the Attitude Towards Mainstreaming Scale. No significant differences existed between the groups on the NTE. However, the PDS-educated group was significantly more positive than the control group on the measure of inclusion provided by the Attitude Towards Mainstreaming Scale. A second study conducted by Long on second year interns revealed that on a questionnaire give to PDS and Non-PDS interns, the PDS interns did not differ significantly on tests of subject matter but felt significantly more secure on nine indicators of pedagogical effectiveness. His conclusion was the PDS program produces a "highly competent student, well versed in pedagogical theory" (p.13).

Conclusion

In summary, research indicates clearly that the structure of teacher education programs is changing as professional development sites replace traditional field placements. The fertile field of professional schools is providing earlier, longer and more structured educative experiences for preservice teachers. Importantly, part of the fertilization is coming from practicing teachers who are involved in re-designing university curriculum and in teaching university students. The theory generally taught in education courses is being linked with the context in which it is taught, often co-taught by teachers in the school and their university colleagues. Teachers' deeper involvement results in increased supervision and mentoring for university students when compared with traditional programs.

In terms of outcomes for preservice teachers, the literature reports individual growth for those educated in professional development sites. Early, largely qualitative research indicates that these preservice teachers perceive themselves and are perceived by teachers, principals and university faculty to be better prepared for life as a classroom teacher do. It is significant that they perceive themselves as better equipped to serve ethnically and linguistically diverse student bodies than those student teachers educated in traditional settings. They are also more likely to want jobs in urban environments if they have worked in professional development sites in these areas. As Dewey predicted in the early part of the 20th century, teachers and students working together are creating their own knowledge.

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