

Simultaneous Renewal in the Urban Professional Development School

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Abstract

Urban schools have the greatest need for renewal of existing staff and the infusion of new teachers. Unfortunately, they present a challenging environment in which to prepare teachers while fostering the renewal process in experienced teachers. Goodlad (1994) proposes that both the school and university embark upon this renewal process through school-university partnerships. This concept, called simultaneous renewal, means individual and institutional renewal are expected to occur in both the school and university. This qualitative study focuses on the renewal experienced in the urban Professional Development Schools (PDS) from the perspective of veteran teachers.

The professional development school presents an opportunity for university educators to partner with schoolteachers for the purpose of adding competent teachers to the workforce. Given the problems in urban school districts of maintaining the best teachers (Haberman & Post, 1998), greater attention to training prospective teachers for the unique needs of their community is essential. Even though they are characterized as having high poverty rates, limited resources, and disadvantaged families, urban schools present an excellent opportunity for preservice teachers to readily explore issues of equity and diversity (Groulx, 2001; Noffke, Clark, Palmeri-Santiago, & Mwalimu, 1996; Pugach & Pasch, 1992), and to learn to develop curricula that are relevant to this populace (Haberman & Post, 1998). Since the late 1980s, a large land grant university in the northeastern region of the United States has provided such settings in urban areas as mandatory for all preservice teachers. Through the professional development school the university has increased opportunities for preservice teachers to interact with students and teachers within the urban school. Preservice teachers conduct observations of best teacher practices, individual and small group tutoring, traditional student teaching practices, and finally, consultative work with having an impact upon the school at large. Goodlad (1988) proposes that such placements will foster the simultaneous renewal of the professional development school and

the university simultaneously.

Simultaneous Renewal

Goodlad (1990) believes renewal should take place within the context of school-university partnerships. One such partnership, called the Professional Development School (PDS), is intended to improve the professional status of teaching through the simultaneous renewal of schools and preservice teacher education (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001; Harris & Harris, 1993), in-service education of experienced teachers, and inquiry and research to add to the knowledge base (Lunenburg, 1998; Sedlak, 1987; Teitel, 1999; Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992). Both the school and university in the PDS have representation and ownership of issues confronting each, and each are characterized by "mutual satisfaction of self interests; and sufficient selflessness on the part of each member to assure the satisfaction of self-interests on the part of all members" (Goodlad, 1988, p.14). The nature of these institutions necessitates renewal at the individual level. "Individuals collectively sustain the renewing process or are carried along by the decline" (Goodlad, 1988, p. 10).

Although PDSs have "spread like wildfire" (Teitel, 1999, p. 6), research in this area is "still in its infancy" (Cobb, 2000, p. 65). Early studies of PDS have not demonstrated the ability of the PDS to improve schools or teachers (Abdal-Haqq, 1998;

Galassi, White, Vesilind & Bryan, 2001; Ross, Brownell, Sindelar, & Vandiver, 1999). Studies focusing particularly on urban Professional Development Schools describe the effects of curriculum changes (Fager, Andrews, Shepherd & Quinn, 1993; Fountain & Evans, 1994; Pasch & Pugach, 1990; Zetlin & MacLeod, 1995) and implementation of new programs (Jett-Simpson, Pugach & Whipp, 1992) on teachers. None of these studies, however, takes an in-depth look at teacher perceptions about the relationships formed with university faculty and students and the resultant effects upon their lives as teachers. This qualitative study was, therefore, undertaken to address the question: How do experienced teachers in urban Professional Development Schools perceive the effects of the partnership on their relationships with other teachers, their own teaching skills, the school climate, and their overall professional development?

Methodology

Teacher Education Program

This study was initiated at a large land grant university situated in the northeastern United States. Faculty from the School of Education and the School of Arts and Sciences began an examination of the teacher preparation program in the mid-1980s. Based upon the literature on school reform (Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986), and the nature of schooling (Dewey, 1938; Goodlad, Soder & Sirotnik, 1990), the faculty concluded that a new type of preparation was needed for teachers of the twenty-first century. Therefore, the university adjusted its requirements to reflect a liberal arts subject area major for all teacher candidates, progressively challenging clinical experiences, a common core of courses to be taken by all prospective teachers across specialty areas (e.g., secondary math, special education), and continuous opportunities for reflection across three years and completion of both B.A. and M.A. degrees. Clinical experiences in each of six consecutive semesters include at least one experience in an urban setting (Case, Norlander, & Reagan, 1995).

The mandatory urban placement provides students with experiences reflecting the increasing diversity in schools in the United States in terms of

ethnicity, economic status, and disability. These experiences may be as observers in the junior year, as student teachers in their senior year, or as managers of programs which have school-wide impact during the Master's year internship. The interns work in schools 20 hours each week in projects such as curriculum development, supporting students or teachers in the use of technology, developing/implementing intensive reading programs, or assisting with the integration of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Site Selection

The school district with the longest relationship with the University was selected, as it would provide the opportunity to study the most experienced teachers and stable partnerships (Goodlad, 1988; Holmes Group, 1990). The schools are in a large inner city replete with the problems typical of urban schools (Campbell, 1993; Johnson, 1994; National Center for Education Statistics, 1996; Uline, 2000). Teachers in these locations are aware of the partnership, have had ample opportunity to work with preservice teachers in their schools, and have had regular contact with university faculty over the years. They can all address issues related to the urban teacher in the Professional Development School. Of the five schools that are in partnership with the university, one principal declined the invitation for his school to participate, citing the increased burden on his teachers, and the other school had only become a partner one year earlier. Therefore, data were collected from teachers in the three remaining schools.

Sample Selection

A purposive sample was selected in which informants were chosen due to their experience working in a professional development school. Teachers selected for inclusion in this study met the following criteria: tenured; exhibited exemplary teaching from the viewpoint of the principal and university coordinator; served in the PDS for a minimum of three years; worked in a supervisory capacity with junior, senior or Master's students; and were willing to participate in this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected in the form of individual interviews, focus group interviews, and an observation of a faculty meeting at each school. A total of twenty-three teachers from three schools participated in the study. Three of the teachers from each school were involved in a series of three in-depth interviews. The remaining teachers at each school participated in a series of three focus group discussions. One observation took place at a faculty meeting in each school.

Data were analyzed using an inductive approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Preliminary analyses were also conducted during the data collection period to identify issues for expansion and clarification in subsequent interviews. Following the data collection, analysis took place using three major techniques. During open coding meaningful units of information were labeled. Axial coding was then undertaken to organize by category those labels that seemed to have a natural connection. Finally, a core category around which all sub-themes seemed to gravitate was identified through the technique of selective coding.

The credibility of this study was established using triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks. Transferability was established by providing a description of both methodology and documentation for all findings. Dependability of the study was established by use of peer debriefing. Confirmability of this study was established using a reflexive journal and process notes to provide an audit trail.

Results

Results of this study demonstrate three themes that illustrate elements of renewal present in the partnerships described. Two of these themes indicate the levels at which teachers believe renewal is occurring: individual and institutional. The third theme, mutual benefit, describes the simultaneous nature of the renewal process.

Each participant is identified by the designation T# for individual teachers and FG# for focus group responses. Session and page numbers from transcripts follow direct quotations. The names of all

parties connected to the city have been changed. The city and the high school have been renamed Metropolis. The two elementary schools have been renamed Urbane Elementary School and City Elementary School. The names used by the teachers have been replaced by the assumed role. For example, if the teacher refers to a student teacher by name, that name is replaced by the words "student teacher."

Individual Renewal

Teachers believe the presence of university students in their schools encourages them to rise to a higher level of professionalism, to learn in their classrooms through observation at two different levels, and to sustain enthusiasm for their jobs as teachers in an urban setting. Teacher 7 illustrates the level of professionalism demanded by the presence of university students in the following:

I'll be very honest. If I take the job seriously about teaching a college student then I know I always have to be at my best, not just for my third graders but also my college students. So it's a double whammy. It really forces me to work to the highest level that I can. (session 3, p. 8)

Teachers appreciate the new ideas preservice teachers bring into their classrooms, along with their enthusiasm for teaching. They feel as if they are taking courses without ever having to leave their own classrooms. The two illustrations that follow indicate the importance of the infusion of new learning in these situations, as well as how teachers use new information to formulate their own ideas.

You learn new things from them. You learn what they're learning. They pass on a lot of interesting information and that's great. It's like being back in the classroom in a way again. I think their enthusiasm is contagious and uplifting. (FG2, session 2, p. 10)

Teacher 3 described his extension of his student teacher's idea to his advanced classes.

One of my student teachers this year said, "I'd like to look to see if this CD-Rom would do this and this." I thought about it and said maybe I could upgrade this for my honors level students. I modified it and geared it up. She had a good idea and I ran with it. (session 2, p. 2)

Teachers are learning in their classrooms from the ideas and practices demonstrated by student teachers. As they appreciate what students are bringing in from the university, they also value the time they spend observing their own students, and formulating new strategies for improvement of the learning situation within their classrooms. They are able to formulate a different view of their own students, while simultaneously observing the preservice teachers at work. Teachers in Focus Group 2 illustrate this.

You see things you don't see when you're up there teaching... whereas when they're up there doing that, you can be watching who is doing what, who attends well, who doesn't. You get an idea of why they're not attending to this. It has made me change seating and put some people who work well together. (session 2, p. 12)

As teachers provide feedback to preservice teachers, they use student teachers as a gauge to ascertain whether the examples they set have been appropriate. Whether or not the behaviors have been found to be proper, teachers reflect on their own teaching and make adjustments as necessary.

I reflect. I look at things that I see a student teacher making and I wonder whether I'm doing the same thing and it kind of puts checks and balances on me, too. I say, I wonder if I did that? I have to watch myself. If I catch them doing something wrong or good, I double check on myself to see if I'm doing the same thing. (T3, session 2, p. 9)

Teachers believe their enthusiasm for their work has been sustained as a result of having university preservice teachers in their schools.

I've been teaching now for over twenty years and I can't imagine having the enthusiasm over the years for the job if I didn't have the student teachers. (T4, session 1, p. 11)

Teacher 9 illustrates the strength of her relationship with preservice teachers, and how its exclusion defines her connection to the university.

I just feel a big lack, especially now that I don't have a student teacher. I don't feel connected at all, you know. (session 1, p. 12)

Institutional Renewal

This element of renewal describes the impact of the partnership upon the entire school whether through programs run by master's level students or assistance provided by university faculty for specialized teacher projects. Teachers describe the extent to which school faculty and students within their building are affected by the presence of the university. They also describe the overall school climate which has changed as a result of the regular presence of university students. T2 describes the mixed levels of acceptance the university receives in his school.

The majority of the people are very pleased with the fact that teacher prep is now getting these kids into the schools and making them have all kinds of experiences. There have been, and there always will be in any institution, people who have bad experiences. There will always be people who don't want to know. That's life. The majority of the school is happy. (T2, session 1, p. 21)

Teachers in Metropolis High School point to specific activities and programs that support a variety of programs throughout the school. These activities reach beyond individual classrooms to affect the entire school population.

We have a couple of things that are happening in this building that wouldn't have happened without the partnership: the tutoring program, the star lab, those two things in particular that

the rest of the school can benefit from because of the university tutors and interns. (T1, session 1, p. 8)

Teacher 4 from City elementary school describes the impact of the university students upon their students as well as entire school.

There's a student teacher in the second grade now and there's one in third grade and in first grade. They're all leaving soon. They're leaving and everyone's groaning. The cooperating teachers will miss them. This has a positive effect on the students as well as the whole school because it gives you that motivation. We need that injected, that enthusiasm that some of them have. (T4, session 3, p. 6)

Mutual Benefit

The term mutual benefit is used to illustrate instances in which teachers impact the partnership at both the school and university. They see their schools as providing valuable experiences to preservice teachers who may have never interacted with students from diverse cultures. They also view the university presence as an integral part of the school population.

We've been focusing on what we've been getting out of the university, but I've been thinking that the student teachers get a lot from here. They all like it. I think a lot of them have never been in a city school and they're kind of surprised how much real education is going on. Many of them choose to come back here for their fifth year. (FG1, session 2, p. 15)

Another teacher expresses the benefit of having university students in the school, and how it affects the reputation of the school as an urban district. She also alludes to the negative way in which they are usually perceived, and how the partnership increases their feelings that they are having a positive impact upon their students.

It ends up being a tremendous experience for them and makes us realize that there are actu-

ally a lot of positive things that we do and usually Metropolis doesn't get that reputation. The rest of the world hears about the negative, but when they're here they realize how much good is happening. (FG1, session 2, p. 15)

Another teacher believes opportunities are being presented for both school and university people. However, in describing opportunities, he focuses on another program in which the university assisted.

I think it's opening some good doors of opportunity for the university and for people here. We've had people who were able to do things that possibly we couldn't have done for the amount of time we had, specifically the Russian program; the university really helped out there. (FG1, session 3, p. 12)

T3 describes the university's presence as a part of the school's normal functional activities. He perceives the relationship between the two institutions as seamless.

I don't think of the university's presence. It's gotten to be so commonplace having them here, it's just like having another faculty. We've gotten so used to them being here it's an automatic thing for them to be assimilated into our group. I think that makes it better. I mean, it just makes it a very smooth running machine and there's no barriers to break down. (session 1, p. 13)

Discussion

Results of this study indicate that teachers in partnership with the university have to varying degrees experienced elements of simultaneous renewal at the individual, institutional and trans-institutional levels. At the individual level, teachers experienced increased levels of professionalism, an infusion of new information, a new classroom perspective, and contagion of enthusiasm. At the institutional level, teachers discuss the school view of the partnership, the school-wide effects of programs established, and the increased motivation among the teachers. At the trans-institutional level, teachers reflect upon: the effect

they have upon preservice teachers, teacher self-esteem, and the assimilation of university faculty into their school.

Teachers believe their relationships with university faculty and preservice teachers have had a positive effect upon their lives within their classrooms. They refer to both university faculty and preservice teachers as resources for their own learning, with greater emphasis upon the university students as catalysts for the continuous infusion of the latest teaching techniques. They describe ways in which they experience continuous learning in their work with preservice teachers. First, they use the practices of preservice teachers as the rudiments of their own new approaches. Second, they see their students from the perspective of observer, rather than as instructor. This results in teachers generating new approaches and techniques toward the individual and collective student groups in their classrooms (Goodlad, 1988; Hobbs & Bullough, 1998; Houle, 1980; Lieberman, 1987; Lieberman & Miller, 1992). Teachers repeatedly spoke of the relationships with the university students as giving them a connection to the university, and contributing to the longevity of their careers. Jones and Sandidge (1997) spoke of the difficulty urban school districts have in retaining good teachers. These interactions are illustrative of the types of experiences teachers need in order to have long careers in urban settings.

Teachers emphasize the importance of the critical mass of university students, whether as tutors for their students or as creators and implementers of programs that benefit their school. They expressed appreciation for the air of studiousness, feelings of professionalism, and encouragement to maintain a professional stance in the presence of preservice teachers. Teachers continue to note the positive influence university preservice teachers have upon their students, the experienced teachers, and the school atmosphere. In schools where there were fewer preservice teachers, teachers felt less connected to the university, and somehow lacking in professional experiences. Due to the fact that three levels of preservice teachers are involved in the school environment and university faculty are not present as often, the

professional atmosphere of the school is attributed to the presence of university students. In all three schools discussions regarding increased teacher interactions were missing. During much of the discussion, teachers have emphasized the relationships between themselves and university students or how university faculty have improved their school environment. Therefore, teachers did not report an increase in their interactions with other teachers. Teachers seemed serious about their work to improve the environment for their students, to become better teachers, and to reflect upon their practice as individuals. However, this did not involve collaboration with colleagues as much as it involved interactions with persons from the university. Goodlad (1990) supports the fact that teachers are reflecting upon their schools and the context of their teaching, but suggests that the impetus for its initiation and perpetuation seem to come from outside of the school. Teachers believe these experiences are essential to their lives and careers. These findings confirm projections by Goodlad (1994) and the Holmes Group (1986) that teachers would have experiences of collegiality and changes in the school climate in school-university partnerships.

Teachers believe their work with preservice teachers and university faculty contributes to the field of teacher education. They seem more aware of their reflections upon their own practice, and how this influences the university students. They understand their roles as models of good teaching and professional decorum for preservice teachers and their own students. They believe they teach preservice teachers during their lunch periods by using these meetings as opportunities to solve school or classroom problems with colleagues. They also provide practical, hands-on feedback to preservice teachers, and work in close cooperation with university supervisors.

Teachers believe they have been able to acclimate university faculty to the urban school, providing themselves as resources and examples of proper conduct in their school community. They assisted university faculty in understanding the cultural difference between the university and school environments. They now see the university

faculty as an integral part of their school community that has provided them with elements of self-esteem they need in these schools where student academic progress is not always apparent, and negative publicity abounds. Unlike statements of cultural clash between university faculty and veteran teachers by Magolda (2001), these statements by teachers chronicle the two sides of the renewal process as described by Goodlad (1994), and further illustrate his definition of teacher education. Teachers have noted their own feelings as colleagues of university faculty who at times provide them insight into the world of urban schooling. On the other side, the assistance provided by university faculty through the presence of the students is seen as vital to the life of the school and the teachers. According to Goodlad (1988), two essential components of renewal are

Workers—at all levels—must have optimal opportunity to infuse their efforts with the expertise of others in similar work.... Second, there must be continuous infusion of both relevant knowledge and alternative (indeed, countervailing) ideas for practice stemming from inquiry into the enterprise. (p. 10)

This study has provided a limited illustration of both components of renewal. In these settings university preservice teachers, particularly those who are student teachers, serve as models of innovative techniques they bring from the university. Although they are not necessarily deemed as having expertise at the level of their cooperating teachers, their creativity and energy instill confidence in the veteran teachers that they are the purveyors of worthwhile information and techniques that serve to encourage the continued learning and longevity of experienced urban teachers. The second component is tied to the first in that preservice teachers are again the instruments by which knowledge is infused into their settings. Master's level students are the legs of the inquiry process. They develop programs and conduct action research that is overseen, contributed to, and later reviewed by teachers in these schools. A major limitation of an approach such as

this is the inability of for teachers to see themselves as inquiring into their own practice, and thus generating knowledge.

Recommendations for Further Study

Through this study a description of the relationships between experienced urban teachers and preservice teachers as well as university faculty has been documented. Aside from the report of problem solving during lunch periods, this study did not describe the relationships between experienced teachers in terms of active work to perpetuate the partnership or inquire into the profession. The university relationships, as described, would appear to perpetuate the image of the teacher in isolation, only with more assistance from the university in the classroom. Further study into the conversational patterns, contents of discussions, formation of inquiry groups, and recruitment of other experienced urban teachers on staff to work with university faculty would further assist in our understanding of the impact of the partnership. In addition, exploration into the role the university might assume in the effort to initiate and perpetuate teacher collaboration is indicated, particularly in the area of inquiry into areas in which relevant questions arise.

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