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District Policy Choices and Teachers' Professional Development Opportunities

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A comprehensive inventory of formal staff development activity and costs in 30 California districts yields a portrait of locally organized opportunities for teachers and reveals the policy stance taken by districts toward teachers and their professional development. Present patterns of resource allocation consolidate the district's role as the dominant provider of teachers' professional development; other sources, including the university or the larger professional community of teachers, are less visible. Expenditures reflect a conception of professional development based almost exclusively in skill acquisition, furthered by a ready marketplace of programs with predetermined content and format; other routes to professional maturation are less evident.

Over the last two decades, professional development has become a growth industry. Local and state policy makers have been persuaded that preservice teacher education cannot fully satisfy the requirements for a well-prepared work force, and have found public support for professional development activities to be consistent with public interest. States have responded to pressures from the field to bolster reform legislation with support in the form of training. In the period spanning the 1985–86 and 1986–87 fiscal years in California, for example, the estimated public investment in staff development programs was approximately 1% of the total education budget. Although a modest investment by most corporate standards, this figure represents a fourfold increase in public support in the wake of the state's omnibus reform legislation of 1983.

Partly as a consequence of the state's expanding policy presence, school districts have assumed an increasingly prominent role as both providers and consumers of professional development services. From both fiscal and programmatic points of view, the configuration of local professional development has assumed greater significance. The most crucial policy choices are made and the heaviest costs borne at the local level. With rare exception, however, the broad structure of local professional development opportunity and characteristic forms of funding have received little attention from researchers or policy makers. Among the useful precedents are Moore and Hyde's (1981) study of the costs, configurations, and contexts of staff development in three urban school districts, and Schlechty et al.'s (1982) interpretation of the social and

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political organization of staff development in one district. On the whole, however, the literature has been dominated by descriptions or short-term evaluations of discrete programs, with an emphasis on programs considered to be innovative in content or form. Neither the professional nor the research literature has examined the prevailing patterns of professional development supported by escalating public investment.

Based on data from a 1-year statewide policy study (Little et al., 1987), this paper examines selected features of local staff development in 30 districts and considers the policy stance implicitly or explicitly taken by districts toward teachers and their professional development. The paper is organized in two major sections. The first examines the structure of locally sponsored professional development, with particular attention to the policy significance of centralization. The second section describes the dominant content of professional development experiences, and the prospects for a close fit between that content and teachers' interests and circumstances. At issue throughout are districts' general policy orientation toward teacher quality and districts' pursuit of specific strategies regarding professional development obligations and opportunities.

Overview of the Study

The State Staff Development Policy Study provides a descriptive inventory of the policy and program choices reflected in local staff development, based on detailed, comprehensive program and cost data on actual staff development activities. The combined cost and program data permit us to assemble a picture of the prevailing pattern of organization and resource allocation. For purposes of this study staff development was defined as

> any activity that is intended partly or primarily to prepare paid staff members for improved performance in present or future roles in the school district.... The term staff member is limited in scope [to include] all certificated personnel and teachers' aides. (Little et al., 1987, p.1)

This definition of staff development, together with the cost model employed in the study, were adapted from those introduced by Moore & Hyde (1981); the adapted cost model differs in some important respects, particularly with regard to the treatment of teachers' salaried work time. For a full description of the study's approach to estimating public investment, see Little et al. (1987) or Stern, Gerritz, and Little (1989).

The study relied on four main data sources. The heart of the study was a description of local policies and practices of staff development in a probability sample of 30 of the state's more than 1,000 school districts. The districts were selected by a probability-proportionate-to-size (PPS) procedure on the basis of student enrollment. The sample districts varied in enrollment from fewer than 400 students to more than 50,000. They ranged from large urban districts with a rich marketplace of professional development options to rural districts remote from sources of professional development activity. And they were spread relatively evenly across the state's diverse geography. Data were collected on more than 800 discrete staff development activities. For each designated "activity" (for example, a seminar series on the state's math curriculum framework or a 1-day workshop on science instruction in the elementary grades), we collected information on content; number and type of participants; duration and format of activity; time spent in planning; roles of teachers, administrators, or external consultants; type of evaluation; funding sources; and costs associated with substitutes, stipends, materials, consultants, travel, or facilities. By building our profile on the basis of specific activities and expenditures, rather than on the basis of official district plans and budgets or on the basis of more abstract descriptions of district strat egy, we bolstered the validity and reliability of the data; in an arena where rhetoric may outpace reality by some considerable margin, this level of detail seemed to us essential. In addition, we charted the responsibilities and professional backgrounds of nearly 400 district- and school-level staff development leaders. To gather these detailed activity and position records, we logged hours of interview time with 280 district staff developers

and 97 principals in the 30 case-study districts. In addition, we collected the locally bargained contract, salary schedule, official long-term plans, and other documents related directly or indirectly to staff development policy and practice.

Case-study data were supplemented in three ways. Mail and telephone surveys enabled us to tap the experiences of teachers and administrators. Telephone interviews were completed with more than 460 randomly selected teachers employed by the 30 case-study districts. The teacher interviews provided us a check on official accounts of activities and priorities, and helped us understand the meaning that teachers attached to the choices made within the district. Mail surveys were also conducted of teachers (N = 749, a return of 75%) selected randomly from the statewide population.[1] These individual teachers contributed their views of the content, format, and value of staff development opportunities in which they had participated during the preceding calendar year. A statewide survey of all non-case-study districts and counties elicited information about program and policy priorities, funding sources, and costs. This survey completed the broad picture of how staff development resources are used and ensured that all local education authorities would have an opportunity to contribute to the study's findings. The district survey was completed by 265 of the state's 1,026 districts (26%) and by 30 of the state's 58 counties (52%). Finally, documents supplied by the State Department of Education provided the legislative authorization, program regulations, program history, and current status of more than 20 state-funded or state-administered federal programs. The inventory included programs specifically intended for staff development, as well as categorical programs or general school improvement programs for which staff development was one of several components. State-funded or state-administered federal programs were understood to constitute an important set of resources for and constraints on local policy and program choices.

The findings reported here reflect the cross-site analysis of data from the 30 case-study districts, supplemented by selected summary data from the statewide mail survey. A cross-site summary of services provided to districts by county offices of education, regional service agencies, and universities is provided in the full report of the study (Little et al., 1987). A second stage of analysis will examine the nature and range of variations among districts.

The Centralization of Professional Development

The public resources that support teachers' professional development are concentrated in district budgets. Beginning with the surge of categorical funding in the mid-1960s, the proliferation of special programs and the press of reform have led many districts to seek greater control over both curriculum development and staff development. Districts have become steadily more concerned about staff development goals, and they have become steadily more sophisticated in the design and delivery of staff development activity.

Directly or indirectly, districts controlled more than 80% of staff development resources flowing from the state during the period of this study. (The remaining share of state funds was distributed to regional or statewide administrative units above the district level.) Approximately one third of all state and federal categorical staff development monies were placed at the direct disposal of districts. In addition, the district had a major voice in setting the terms by which money flowed to individual teachers under the terms of the state's mentor teacher program and minigrant program (another third of the state staff development resources). Finally, the district retained approval rights over school plans generated as part of the state's School Improvement Program or other school-based staff development programs. To varying degrees, state and federal categorical funds were supplemented by general fund allocations, primarily in the form of salaried time for district administrators and specialists.

Districts employ staff development to pursue multiple goals, and might reasonably exploit quite different strategies in doing so.

The concentration of resources alone is not adequate to explain the district's strategic role in teachers' professional development, or its stance toward teachers and teaching. In its commitment of general fund monies and in its deployment of categorical funds, the district communicates (a) the general status of teachers' professional development within the broader array of district priorities, (b) specific conceptions of what it means to develop professionally, and (c) the relative importance given to teachers in their various roles as individual educators, as members of a school faculty, as participants in a wider professional community, or as employees of an institution with its own needs and requirements.

Although centralized resources do not preclude diverse conceptual and practical alternatives, one strategy now swamps all others. Districts have emerged as direct providers or brokers of staff development services, a fact that is significant in two ways. First, the district dominates in relation to other sources or sponsors of professional development. In the year of this study, teachers were two to three times more likely to participate in a district-sponsored staff development program than to enroll in college or university course work. These data correspond to the national picture constructed by the most recent report of the National Education Association (1987) on *The Status of the American Teacher*, which records a 15-year decline in teachers' participation in university course work and a corresponding increase in attendance at district-sponsored workshops and conferences. In terms of both participation rates and direct monetary subsidies, districts overwhelm other sources of professional knowledge or other opportunities for collegial contact. In this respect, professional development in teaching more closely approximates an industrial model (in which the employer designs and conducts job-relevant training) than it does a model common in professionalized occupations, in which member-governed professional associations play a more direct and prominent role.

Second, professional development bears the stamp of the district's local concerns, circumstances, and history. Teachers' opportunities for intellectual growth and career advancement are bound closely to the conceptions of teaching and professional development held by districts. The specific content of staff development activities is likely to be shaped by short-term district priorities; with the march from one academic year to the next or with the changing enthusiasms of the state department of education, professional development priorities (and resources) shift from language arts to mathematics, or from early childhood education to middle schools. Virtually all of the 30 case-study districts had organized subject-area staff development to accord with the state's schedule for implementing new curriculum frameworks. The institutional interests of the district are not entirely distinct from the professional motivations and interests of individual teachers—but neither are their interests coterminous. From the point of view of the individual teacher, public resources spent to advance district interests are dollars not available to further other interests or needs. The greater the investment in internally conceived staff development, the more difficult it appears to be for teachers to wrest support for teacher-initiated activities outside the district.

Districts' general policy orientations are expressed by their actual resource allocations. Table 1 provides detail on resources invested in teachers' staff development activities administered by districts and schools in calendar year 1986. (The activities on which costs were estimated spanned calendar year 1986; the rates used to calculate costs were based on fiscal year 1985–86.) This table specifies the districts' current monetary costs, those conventionally considered as part of program operations. They include the costs of substitute teachers, stipends, external consultants or presenters, facilities, and the portion of administrators' or specialists' salaries devoted to staff development activity. The table displays mean costs across 30 districts, represented as a dollar figure per average daily attendance (ADA), per teacher, and per participant

TABLE 1
Current monetary investment in professional development for teachers by local school districts (based on costs associated with staff development activities in 30 districts)

Components of current monetary expenditure	Cost per participant hour (in dollars)	Cost per teacher (in dollars)	Cost per average daily attendance (in dollars)	Percentage of current monetary program cost	Percentage of total classroom cost
Substitutes	2.66	210.31	9.39	25	0.23
External providers	0.64	50.94	2.27	5	0.05
Miscellaneous and facilities	0.44	34.70	1.55	4	0.04
Stipends	1.82	143.56	6.41	16	0.15
Leaders' time for planning and delivery	5.50	434.19	19.38	50	0.47
Total: Taxpayers' current monetary investment	11.06	873.70	39.00	100	0.94

hour. In addition, each component of the investment (such as the cost of substitutes) is shown as a percentage of total cost of program operations and as a percentage of the total estimated costs of supporting a California classroom during the period of the study (about $93,000). A certain pattern of policy choices emerges in (a) the relative prominence of district specialists over teachers as designers and leaders of professional development activity and (b) the relatively greater dollar investment in "leaders" than in "learners."

The Prominence of District Specialists

Districts rely heavily on in-house staff to plan and conduct staff development. In these districts, as in districts studied elsewhere (Howey & Vaughan, 1983; Moore & Hyde, 1981; Schlechty et al., 1982), relevant policy and program decisions reside primarily in the central office. Full-time or part-time central office administrators and staff development specialists accounted for the design and delivery of 92% of all participant hours at the district level. In these districts, as in the three districts studied in depth by Moore and Hyde, responsibilities for staff development were widely distributed across as many as 9 or 10 offices. The largest *share* of resources, however, was aligned with two major functions: curriculum and instruction, and categorical program administration. More than 80% of participant hours in district staff development were planned and delivered by district staff responsible for these two areas. Of total participant hours devoted to staff development in 30 districts, two thirds were accounted for by district-sponsored activities that had been conceived and conducted by district-level specialists and that involved teachers from more than one school.

In midsize to large districts,[2] staff development administration and leadership appear to follow a common pattern. Relatively few midlevel administrators oversee staff development offerings, supported by staff developers who are teachers on leave from the classroom. These teacher-staff developers may hold permanent or quasi-permanent positions in the central office, but they remain on the teachers' salary schedule and are considered a part of the teachers' bargaining unit. For the purposes of this description, we considered these teacher-specialists to be part of a central office staff devoted to planning for and delivering staff development services to classroom teachers and administrators. Thus, they are distinguished from full-time classroom teachers who may occasionally lead staff development activities.

District specialists who devote their time to staff development are characteristically knowledgeable, thoughtful, skillful individuals. They often have a reputation for being talented presenters, and they prepare care-

fully for the activities they lead. They take pride in keeping up with current developments in research and practice and tend to have well-honed instructional and interpersonal skills. They display concern over the disparity they see between a research-based image of "good staff development" (for example, staff development that includes classroom-level support) and the arrangements the district is able to establish with limited resources. Nonetheless, the very existence of such specialists constitutes a particular policy choice: to concentrate resources, expertise, and status associated with professional improvement at the district level and to invest a relatively small number of professionals with the resources associated with leadership in professional development.

External Consultants

Virtually every district employs consultants and external presenters for some staff developmental activities. Nevertheless, the total cost devoted to external consultants is not large. District administrators report that the cost of an individual presenter may range from as little as $100 to more than $1,000 for time and travel, but tends to average about $250. External presenters play a role in less than one fifth of all participant hours, at a cost of less than one tenth of the average district's yearly monetary expenditures and a still smaller percentage of the total public investment.

The significance of external consultants does not reside in the fiscal demands they pose, but in the logic and strategy they represent. Ten years ago, the RAND Corporation's "Change Agent" study concluded that external consultants were frequently overused and badly used (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1979). Unless a consultant cooperated closely with a district or school over a long time, the "return on investment" was marginal. Even worse, writes Rosabeth Kanter (1983), an institutional habit of relying on "purchased talent" may contribute to a "culture of inferiority" as insiders come to believe that none of them is good enough to do the job. Under such conditions, she argues, performance tends toward the mediocre and individual commitment weakens.

Among the 30 case-study districts, few had adopted a carefully strategic approach toward work with consultants, giving preference to those who could establish a long-term relationship with the district. In an effort at quality control, some individual administrators made it a policy to invest only in consultants whom they had observed personally, but in no case was this an institutionalized district policy. Similarly, some administrators conducted briefing sessions or provided materials to acquaint a consultant with key goals and relevant history, but the practice was idiosyncratic. Others used consultants as part of a "trainer-of-trainers" strategy designed to enlarge the pool of capable insiders, but acknowledged that such a strategy was both expensive and unwieldy. On the whole, patterns of the past prevailed: Districts showed an inclination to go "outside" first for presenters and to rely on word-of-mouth endorsements as sufficient guarantee of a consultant's quality.

Leaders and Learners

A district's conception of teachers' professional development is displayed in part by the relative size of its investment in "leaders" or "learners." Leader costs take the form of (a) salaries for administrators or specialists with special responsibility for staff development, (b) external consultants, trainers, or presenters, and (c) extra compensation awarded to teachers when acting as staff development planners or presenters. The components of learner costs that fall under the heading of program operations, or current monetary outlay, are (a) substitutes or release time, (b) conference registration, tuition subsidies, sabbatical pay, or other stipends, (c) materials available to teachers, and (d) travel reimbursement.[3]

Across the 30 case-study districts, "leader time" is one of the highest cost elements of staff development. Time spent by administrators, staff developers, and teachers in planning, delivering, and evaluating staff development accounts for nearly half of the current monetary costs of staff development—more than twice the cost of teacher substitutes (a major component of "learner time"). District administrators holding part-

time responsibilities for staff development account for the largest share of leader time, although the precise allocation of their time to "program" and to "administration" is uncertain. Classroom teachers account for only 10% of the leadership time devoted to planning and delivering staff development.

As a component of program operation costs, leaders' time for planning and delivery of specific activities was the largest component in the 30 case-study districts, representing half of current monetary expenditures. The value of costs associated with learners' time made up the next largest expenditures. The cost of substitutes together accounted for one quarter of the direct program expenditures, although the actual *cost* of substitutes is less problematic to many districts than the *availability* of qualified substitutes. The full-investment model also accounted for the opportunity cost associated with reallocated instructional time, for example, pupil-free days. This figure was based on the mean teacher salary and averaged slightly less than $350 per teacher in addition to direct program expenditures (see Little et al., 1987, p. 126).

Discretion and Decision Making

Linked to patterns of expenditure are the patterns of influence and authority that govern the content and form of professional development. Staff development decision making has attracted attention for two reasons. First, teachers have sought greater influence over choices of content and format as a means of ensuring a greater fit among staff development design, classroom demands, and professional experience (Koppich, Gerritz, & Guthrie, 1986; Leiter & Cooper, 1979). Second, district-sponsored staff development has been criticized for fragmented decision making that operates at too great a distance from the classroom, remains uncoordinated among offices within a district, and is not integrated with either curriculum policy or personnel policy (Schlechty & Whitford, 1983).

This study addressed staff development decision making in four ways. First, district administrators and staff developers in the 30 case-study districts were asked to describe the decision-making process that led to each of the recorded activities. Second, teachers and administrators surveyed by mail were asked to describe their perceptions of the current role of teachers and administrators in making staff development decisions. Third, district administrators surveyed by mail were asked to indicate whether staff development choices were subject to the advice or approval of a districtwide committee. Finally, union representatives were interviewed in 24 of the case-study sites to determine the union's role in providing or influencing staff development.

There are four mechanisms by which teachers assert their own interests and priorities in professional development. First, teachers act as independent consumers when they elect to pursue a course of university study, to attend conferences on their own time, or in other ways follow their individual interests. Some of these pursuits earn credits that qualify teachers for salary advancement. In fact, more than three quarters of the public monetary investment in professional development was accounted for by the present value of future salary increases associated with teachers' independent activities. (For the full array of costs, including the discounted present value of future salary increases that result from professional development, see Little et al., 1987, p. 127.)

Second, teachers participate in a range of formal and informal needs assessment activities. These may range from questionnaires on which teachers rank preferences from among a closed set of topical alternatives, to informal face-to-face consultation, to a structured program of minigrant funding for teacher-initiated proposals. The first and second are far more common than the last, thus permitting mechanisms for "input" while preserving centralized control over actual substance and form.

Third, teachers secure a modicum of collective influence through the operation of formal advisory committees at the school and district levels. Four fifths of the districts reported having some mechanism for deciding or proposing staff development priorities. More than one third have a separate staff development committee—some with

considerable influence on district decisions and with good teacher credibility. In others (about one quarter) staff development decision making is subsumed among the responsibilities of a district curriculum committee, thereby in principle enabling the integration of staff development and curriculum development (see Schlechty & Whitford, 1983, on this matter). At the school level, teachers and administrators surveyed by mail both stated a strong preference for joint decision making, but administrators were more likely than teachers to believe that joint decision making now prevails. One explanation for the discrepancy in teachers' and administrators' views is that administrators work with a small number of teachers to arrive at a decision; from the administrators' point of view, they in fact decide "with teachers." The large numbers of teachers who are not privy to such deliberations may feel that they have little part in the decisions.

Finally, teachers' organizations constitute a mechanism for collective influence. Advocates have argued that "teacher unionists are uniquely capable of articulating the in-service needs of teachers and effecting change in the models which influence in-service education." (Leiter & Cooper, 1979, p. 107). In-service education, they declare, is a priority of unions. In the period preceding this study, teachers' organizations played a prominent role in deliberations over state-funded categorical programs of staff development. At the district level, however, teachers' organizations were less visible and less of a force in policy and program decisions.

Bargained contracts affected staff development directly by specifying days and hours of employment and the conditions under which individuals might be granted leaves or apply earned credit for salary advancement. Although contracts in more than half of the districts provided for sabbaticals or other leaves and specified staff development credit for salary advancement, other explicit conditions were far less common. Some contracts (25%) provided for regular paid staff development days, and a small number (2, or 8%) offered a "credential incentive program" in which the district paid tuition and fees for teachers who earned additional credentials in district-determined areas of need. With the exception of participation on the committees convened to select recipients of the state's "mentor teacher" awards, district administrators were largely unaware of any way in which the unions either provided staff development directly or influenced the design of district-sponsored activity.

Union representatives' reports closely matched district administrators' perceptions. In two thirds of the cases, the union provided no staff development; those that did tended to restrict their activities to topics of specific interest to union members such as the state's new recertification requirement, teachers' rights, and financial planning. Innovative program examples of the sort represented by the American Federation of Teachers' Teachers Research Linker Project (piloted in California) or by the National Education Association's Mastery in Learning Project (with two sites in California) were not mentioned in the 24 districts whose union representatives were interviewed. Less than half of the local bargaining agents had submitted any explicit proposals regarding staff development during the last 3 years. Such proposals most often were attempts to provide for greater teacher involvement in staff development decision making and additional time for staff development activity. In most cases, these proposals did not become part of the bargained contract. Teacher organizations as providers and promoters of staff development were not a prominent part of the prevailing staff development picture in local districts.

Administrators retain more influence than teachers over the content and form of staff development. In one fashion or another, teachers may be consulted about staff development preferences, but they are far less likely than administrators or specialists to be involved in the detailed decision making. District specialists make their decisions about the content and form of activities based on some combination of their own knowledge and enthusiasms, the marketplace of presenters and materials, teachers' stated interests, and the district's priorities. Among these influences, teachers' voices

tend to be weakest, at least with regard to the expenditure of funds on formal staff development activities.

In summary, districts that employ teachers emerge as the principal agents of teachers' professional development. The concentration of professional development resources at the district level (both in terms of short-term program operations and longer term teacher compensation) has been accompanied by a general tendency to centralize staff development planning and activity above the level of the teacher or the faculty, and to foster the specialization of staff development roles.

The Content of Professional Development: Menus and Markets

The local orientation toward teachers' professional development is best described as "service delivery." It is expressed by (a) a range of activity determined largely by a marketplace of packaged programs and specially trained presenters, (b) uniformity and standardization of content, with a bias toward skill training, and (c) relatively low intensity with regard to teachers' time, teachers' involvement, and the achieved fit with specific classroom circumstances.

Lure of the Staff Development Marketplace

Staff development opportunities are determined in large part by the available marketplace of presenters and programs. Confronted with limited resources, districts make an accommodation in favor of packaged programs (developed either internally or externally) or presenters known to earn high satisfaction ratings from large numbers of teachers. Districts' staff development choices have been shaped in part by market forces—what is available, in what form, with what apparent match to pressing local needs, and with what reputed credibility among teachers.

The centralization of staff development places a premium on discrete, structured curricula with some apparent relevance to diverse groups of teachers, regardless of grade level or subject area. District administrators look for "well-packaged" approaches that lend themselves to workshop-style presentation for large groups of teachers. As district administrators scan the "audience" of teachers—diverse in background, experience, teaching situation, and individual interests or inclinations—they are understandably disposed toward a district inventory of staff development services that more closely resembles a catalogue than it does a reasoned set of program and policy choices. A few districts (6 in our sample of 30) restricted expenditures to a small number of staff development priorities and methods. Most retain a lengthy menu of short-term workshops to attract the interest of individuals while reserving some resources for special pilot projects with entire schools or for long-term work with groups of teachers.

Uniformity and Standardization of Content

Staff development content can be examined for the extent to which it attains sensitivity to current instructional assignments, intellectual depth, and a reasonable combination of subject content and pedagogy. The challenge is made more complex by the range of experience and sophistication in the teaching workforce and the range of circumstances that teachers confront. Nonetheless, teachers' professional development opportunities typically take the form of discrete programs with predetermined content and format.

The last decade has seen the rise and (slow) fall of "generic pedagogy" as the dominant content of local staff development. Most of the packaged programs have emphasized generic methods of classroom organization and instruction independent of subject area. Districts have often invested a sizable pool of resources in developing, purchasing, delivering, or promoting staff development organized around such topics. Programs emphasizing content-independent pedagogy now appear to occupy a declining proportion of district staff development offerings, though it remains common to find districts offering workshop series titled "Clinical Teaching," "Elements of Instruction," "Classroom Management," "TESA (Teacher Expectations, Student Achievement)," and "Cooperative Learning." Staff

development targeted toward these and other examples of generic pedagogy accounted for more than one quarter of all participant hours.

Three conditions help to explain the popularity of generic pedagogy. First, pedagogically oriented staff development reflects certain basic realities of schoolteaching. For example, schoolteachers (unlike parents or tutors) teach "in a crowd," and effective classroom management is crucial to their success with students. One fifth of all district and school-site staff development hours addressed classroom management problems. Second, the facets of "effective teaching" usefully mapped by classroom research during the past decade have been largely those of management and pedagogy; research-sensitive staff development leaders have therefore focused on practices of classroom management, instructional planning, and instructional delivery independent of subject matter. Finally, an emphasis on generic methods of teaching enables a few staff development leaders to serve a large and diverse teacher population, all of whom arguably have certain classroom demands in common and each of whom is presumably capable of acting independently to fit the generic content with specific curriculum and classroom circumstances.

Critics of pedagogically oriented staff development have stressed its concentration on teacher behavior (and corresponding inattention to student response), its narrowly technical view of teaching, its insensitivity to the special pedagogical demands of specific subject disciplines, and its vulnerability to gimmickry and faddism. Whatever the reasons, the relative prominence of "generic pedagogy" is on the decline. Teachers have pressed for greater fit between staff development content and subject matter content. State initiatives have moved districts to reexamine their staff development offerings and, in some cases, to reorganize district administration to attach formally designated staff development responsibilities more closely to curriculum. In one major respect, however, the treatment of new content is consistent with the general trends toward centralization and formalization (or market orientation), and consistent with the history associated with training in generic pedagogy. Judging by the prevailing training format of staff development, most offerings are of a "one-size-fits-all" character; few take advantage of the considerable differences in teachers' experience or teaching assignments. Among the exceptions in the policy study data are seminar series cosponsored by districts and university academic departments, teacher-initiated minigrants, or the selective use of subject area "mentor teachers" who serve as consultants to colleagues.

District activities during the period of this study reflect a pattern of long-established but slowly declining commitments to staff development centered exclusively on generic teaching methods and a corresponding awakening of interest in continuing teacher education that is more richly connected to curriculum.[4] Staff development activities in 1986 displayed a renewed emphasis on curriculum following passage of the state's omnibus reform bill (SB 813) in 1983. Thus, academic content areas were a major focus of staff development, with the heaviest concentration on reading, language arts, math, and science. Nearly three quarters of all staff development time (72% of all participant hours) involved a combination of subject matter content and pedagogy. The specific demands and challenges posed by the state's ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student population also made their way into the content of about one third of all participant hours, though it is unclear how student needs, subject content, and pedagogical method have been integrated.

Intensity of Teacher Involvement

Frequent, intensive staff development directly related to the intellectual and social demands of teaching has been argued to yield more benefit than infrequent, disjointed events (Joyce & Showers, 1981; Showers, 1982). Three measurements can be used to gauge the intensity of staff development and its potential tie to teachers' instructional assignments and current school priorities: duration of formal activities, demonstrable links to the classroom, and con-

gruence with developments in curriculum or other aspects of the educational program.

The first measure of intensity is duration: the "long-term" versus "short-term" nature of staff development, measured both as the number of participant hours and as delivery in single or multiple sessions. Although "one-shot" events remain part of the staff development menu, especially at the school site, nearly half of the school activities and more than half of all district activities can be measured in days, not hours. Although this study found relatively few examples of truly long-term, incremental staff development, we found far fewer instances of very short "one-shot" activities than anticipated. Of all participant hours, only about 10% were spent in one-time events of 6 hours or less. The majority (76%) were spent in staff development series requiring 12 or more hours. Judged against the standard of long-term, in-depth study suggested by Lortie (1975) or Conant (1963), these figures represent a modest gain in exposure (time) but an unknown increment in intellectual substance.

The second measure of intensity is the availability of classroom and school follow-up to initial training activities, or alternatively, the availability of time for joint planning and problem solving among teachers. A widely accepted premise in the research literature is that course work, skill training, or other "away from the classroom" professional development has only marginal influence when teachers lack opportunity to examine the fit of new ideas with current curriculum, instruction, or student needs.

The argument in favor of classroom follow-up gained prominence after Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers published a critique of skill-based staff development, estimating a "transfer rate" of less than 20% in the absence of classroom-based "coaching" (Joyce & Showers, 1981). The most sophisticated of the skill training studies trace the effects of training into classroom practice. From these studies, one learns that (a) the more complex the ideas and methods, the greater the requirement for incremental, long-term support (Joyce & Showers); (b) teachers' acceptance of an idea and their commitment to its use in the classroom are more powerful than their knowledge or skill in predicting actual classroom use (Mohlman, Coladarci, & Gage, 1982); (c) the greater the difference between current classroom practice and the (new) content of staff development, the greater the time and effort required (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1979; Showers, 1982); but (d) modest staff development investments stretch very far indeed when teachers are well organized at the school level to provide support for one another (Little, 1984).

As described by the district and school staff developers, nearly 2 of every 3 participant hours were associated with some form of follow-up. However, follow-up was more likely to be optional than required. In only about one quarter of the district activities and less than one fifth of school activities were teachers required to participate in follow-up as a condition of participation. Judging by other related research (Little, 1984), the prospects that follow-up will actually occur and will be consequential are much greater when teachers make an explicit commitment to participate. In practice, "optional" follow-up tends to mean no follow-up.

About two thirds of surveyed teachers reported follow-up as having been available for some or all of the activities they had participated in during a 1-year period, but rarely did the follow-up involve teachers' observing one another. That is, when teachers describe "follow-up," they employ a definition considerably broader than the classroom observation or consultation envisioned by most staff developers under the rubric of "coaching." The most common form of follow-up exploited by teachers was an opportunity to plan with other teachers, or simply to discuss what was learned.

Most teachers (59%) who have attended conferences report spending 10 hours or less in follow-up from workshops and conferences; a small percentage (8.4%) reports follow-up of more than 50 hours. Those with the highest participation in follow-up also reported the greatest impact on their teaching. According to teachers surveyed by mail, an investment of more than 10 hours after

a workshop or conference markedly increases the apparent benefit. The more common (low) level of follow-up left relatively few teachers convinced that the workshops and conferences they had attended had yielded substantial impact.

As conceived by district administrators, follow-up heavily favors classroom coaching. In terms of sheer numbers, however, district specialists cannot hope to rely on direct classroom observation and consultation to meet the needs and satisfy the interests of teachers who may outnumber them (on an FTE basis) 80 to 1. Some districts have organized a version of the "trainer-of-trainers" model intended to build both the skills and the commitments of school-site teachers and administrators. Some have placed a greater share of staff development funds or other resources at the school site. Some have assigned district specialists a "client group" of specific schools. Still, the greatest proportion of specialists' time is spent preparing for or leading direct service activities for groups of teachers on a "sign-up" basis, with follow-up held out as an optional service. Follow-up as a component of district activity becomes less problematic to the extent that schools are organized to receive new ideas and to support teachers in their use; the issue of classroom change is in large part an issue of out-of-classroom time during the salaried workday.

The third measure of intensity is the relationship between staff development and other developments in curriculum, instruction, and organization of students for learning. Staff development integrated in a larger program of curriculum development and school improvement, or an individual's long-term plan for career development, might reasonably be expected to yield greater benefit than activities that are isolated from other developments in the lives of individuals, classrooms, and schools. The prospects for integration are improved when funding specifically calls for such a link (as in the state's School Improvement Program), and diminished when program-specific criteria for eligibility or content are stringently enforced (as in Chapter I). Overall, program segmentation is more common that program integration. Despite the fact that School Improvement Program funds supported more than half (56%) of all school-based staff development hours, fewer than one fifth of the case-study schools described staff development activities that were closely linked to other program improvement efforts.

Evaluation of Activities and Priorities

Consistent with the orientation to menu-driven, idiosyncratic service delivery, the evaluation of staff development in most of the case-study districts is a narrowly conceived affair. Virtually every teacher and administrator in the state has been asked to rate his or her satisfaction with the objectives, activities, materials, and leaders of discrete events. Few have participated in a more comprehensive assessment of the total array of professional development opportunities. Fewer still have been invited (or required) to supply systematic evidence showing how they or their students have profited (or not) from participation in staff development. This is not to promote a narrowly technical or mechanistic view of teaching in which every occasion of staff development is converted to a checklist of observable behaviors. It is, however, to suggest that "satisfaction ratings" are a woefully inadequate test of the return that participants or taxpayers earn from a sizable investment of time and other resources and to propose that teachers—as professionals—have a stake in confining their participation to those activities that they can demonstrate will produce the greatest advances in understanding, practice, and commitment.

The cost-effectiveness associated with district-level professional development is a far more complex matter than can be accounted for by participation rates or by the short-term implementation of training in individual classrooms. It is unlikely we could ever attribute teachers' career commitment or classroom perfomance to specific professional development initiatives, but it is quite plausible that these outcomes could be attributed in part to entire patterns of professional development obligation and oppor-

tunity. Among the 30 sample districts, however, only 8 (27%) were engaged in systematic program evaluation that could be expected to yield insights affecting districtwide policy and program choices. The more common reliance on activity-specific evaluation methods helps to perpetuate a menu-driven pattern of professional development.

Conclusion

Comprehensive descriptions of formal staff development activity in 30 California districts yield a portrait of locally organized professional development opportunities for teachers. Admittedly, a cross-site summary masks meaningful variations. It underestimates the existence and significance of innovative initiatives that we know have captured the attention and admiration of researchers and professional educators. It fails to capture atypical district configurations. Nonetheless, the significance of the cross-site analysis lies in the inescapable pattern of policy and practice it reveals. The policy expressed by practice was rarely explicit and deliberate, and the implicit assumptions that underlay the available activities often went unrecognized, unexamined, and unevaluated. Yet the implicit assumptions, or implicit policy choices, are evident in the expenditure of human and material resources—in the "dollar choices." The dominant conception of teachers and teaching is disclosed by the pattern of actual practice, and it is a pattern heavily weighted toward district-level control over professional development priorities and practices, and toward short-term service delivery by specialists.

Several considerations favor district-level centralization and the specialization of roles. In principle, the concentration of resources and decisions enables a district to align professional development with program development. Staff development resources can be marshaled in the service of districtwide goals and priorities for change. Standards of efficiency are met by staff development offerings that supply new methods and materials to teachers across schools. From an institutional point of view, districts are increasingly well positioned to generate a work force that is well informed about local initiatives in curriculum and instruction and well steeped in the local knowledge required to succeed with a specific student population.

But the centralization of resources has limitations and drawbacks. First, centralization above the school level does not ensure coordination and coherence. In these 30 districts, as in other districts subjected to close scrutiny, "centralization" refers primarily to the division between district and school (or teacher). Coordination at the district level is uneven, thus threatening the very coherence that is the strength of the centralization strategy. Responsibility for formal staff development has remained closely linked to funding sources, and thus has been bureaucratically compartmentalized. As a consequence, staff development remains largely dissociated from other personnel policies (teacher selection, tenure decisions, evaluation, promotion), from program evaluation, and from program development. Specialization at the district level has helped to create and sustain segmentation: the separation of staff development planning and activity from the life of schools and classrooms, and fragmentation at the district level according to funding source and regulation.

Professional development is conceived in programmatic terms, delivered as discrete activities or events on an individual "sign-up" basis. The advantages from the district's standpoint are several. A wide menu of options permits some degree of responsiveness to teachers of widely differing teaching assignments, experience, and career aspirations. At the same time, by maintaining control over the options districts can be assured that scarce resources will be devoted only to activities that also advance the district's institutional goals—hence, the widespread preoccupation with "alignment." Nonetheless, time and other scarce resources are consumed by formal programs and activities, leaving few resources to support promising alternatives.

The encapsulation of learning opportunities in formal programs may depress the number and quality of informal learning opportunities during the salaried workday,

in part by limiting the resources that might be devoted to freeing teachers for consultation with one another. Further, the programmatic orientation sustains a tendency to look outside rather than inside for experts, and thus to underexploit the interests and capacities of experienced teachers. It perpetuates the privacy of teaching by orienting both needs assessment and program offerings to individual teachers, rarely treating entire faculties or other teacher groups (departments, for example) as consumers. Menu-driven offerings tend to place teachers in a passive role and to discriminate poorly between the novice and the veteran. Finally, the market-driven and menu-oriented character of much staff development leaves the field vulnerable to content that is intellectually shallow, gimmicky, or simply wrong.

Districts confront various policy issues and trade-offs in their pursuit of a well-prepared and committed teacher workforce. At the heart of these issues and trade-offs are considerations of purpose, and especially the tension between institutional requirements and individual interests. Although we expect to uncover a range of district-level configurations in subsequent analyses, the central tendency seems clear. In the mid-1980s, public resources serve to consolidate the district's role as the dominant agent of teachers' professional development; other sources, including the university or the larger professional community of teachers, are less visible. Expenditures have been driven largely by a conception of professional development based almost exclusively in skill acquisition, furthered by a ready marketplace of formal programs with predetermined content and format; other conceptions of professional maturation are less evident. Finally, the responsibilities and rewards of professional development have devolved increasingly to a cadre of specialists; relatively few teachers report working in schools in which they feel an obligation to contribute to one another's learning and find sufficient opportunity to do so.

Notes

[1] We have not analyzed the refusals to detect possible systematic bias in the teacher mail sample; however, the completed sample mirrors the state's teacher work force with respect to years of teaching experience, ethnicity, gender, and teaching assignment (level, community size). Further, teachers' appended comments span the anticipated range from vivid enthusiasm to staunch criticism. At the extremes, the confirmed enthusiasts outnumber the entrenched critics by about six to one, suggesting a possible selection bias in favor of supportive respondents.

[2] The description of an in-house staff development structure is least accurate for rural districts and for some small districts located in or near major metropolitan areas. In most other respects, however, the strategic orientation and programmatic configuration presented here holds true across districts regardless of size.

[3] The Moore and Hyde (1981) study prorated teachers' salaries to account for any time spent on staff development; to avoid the problem of double-counting costs associated with salaried time, our own study did so only when pupils' instructional time was reduced.

[4] The shift toward greater subject matter content is not necessarily a shift toward more decentralized and teacher-responsive or teacher-initiated decisions. In most of the examples in our data, subject-matter content was linked to state or local curriculum initiatives. For a critical essay on administrators' and policy makers' external control over teachers' professional activities, see Hargreaves (1989).

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