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ABSTRACT

Research in staff development and in teacher career development provides useful information so that staff development programs can be tailored to accommodate teachers' needs at different career stages. Findings of studies on staff development have identified characteristics of successful inservice programs. Collaboration between all participants in organizing and planning the program is of prime importance. Essential, also, is that the program be based on an assessment of the real needs and professional concerns of teachers, and be focused on specifics that may be successfully translated into practice. School-based programs which include effective training components have been rated by participants as successful. Research on the stages of concern through which teachers progress as they advance in their profession has identified a developmental pattern which evolves from the early survival stage, through an adjustment stage, and finally arrives at a vocationally mature stage. Staff development programs can be tailored to accommodate teachers' needs at different career stages. By offering more comprehensive staff development programs which use the stages of concern guidelines, well designed programs can be developed to help teachers become more effective. (JD)

Tailoring Staff Development to Meet Teachers' Needs

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Tailoring Staff Development

to Meet Teachers' Needs

Teachers often complain that staff development programs are poorly designed and that they do not meet teachers' needs. The research in staff development and teacher career development provides useful information so that staff development programs can be tailored to accommodate teachers' needs at different career stages. Based on this research, the content of staff development programs and the delivery mode of the training should differ with each stage of teacher development.

These issues will be reviewed in this paper in the following sections: (1) features of effective staff development programs, (2) stages of teacher career development, and (3) recommendations for the design of staff development programs to meet teachers' needs.

Features of Effective Staff Development Programs

Persons who plan and conduct inservice programs are aware that many programs of the past have been poorly designed and presented. Viewed from the perspective of the last 15 years, the results of organized staff development activities to bring about substantive improvements in instruction and learning have been less than satisfactory.

In recent years, researchers concerned about the ineffectiveness of inservice education have systematically examined programs and activities to discover answers to such questions as: What is the purpose of staff development? What should staff development programs contain: How should staff development be designed? How should staff development be implemented?

There are now over 9,200 publications listed in ERIC and we know a great deal about elements of staff development that contribute to successful program planning

and implementation (Phi Delta Kappa, 1983). Studies by Bruce Joyce, Gordon Lawrence, Judith Warren Little, and others provide insight into the most important of these elements. The following list of characteristics of effective inservice education is a summary of these essential elements:

Collaboration: Organizing and planning staff development must be collaborative. The more collaborative the approach the greater the opportunities for mutual contribution to aims, perspectives, and methods. The more closely that collaboration engages persons in the examination of classroom practices, the greater will be the commitment to collegiality and reciprocity, especially by principals and teachers (Little, 1981).

Participation: Professional development should involve the entire school staff including teachers and administrators (Far West Laboratory, 1981). Staff development programs that place teachers in an active role, generating ideas and constructing materials are more likely to succeed (Lawrence, Baker, Hansen, and Elzie, 1974). Staff development should be based on a developmental rather than a deficit model. Teachers and administrators should feel that inservice education is a part of continued growth rather than remedial training (King and Golinda, 1980).

Planning: Planning, particularly long range planning, of staff development is essential to effective implementation of instructional improvement activities. At least three levels of staff development planning are needed in most school districts: (1) the overall plan, (2) the project or program plan, and (3) the session plan (Hartzog and Hundley, 1981).

Assessment: Accurate assessment of needs is one of the most critical characteristics of staff development. In order to determine what improvements are necessary, staff development should support inquiry into concerns of teachers, administrators and parents at the school level. This should focus on analysis of what is happening (e.g., teacher use of effective teaching strategies, administrator leadership skills), integration of findings based on school goals, planning of improvement designed to improve the instructional program based on school goals, and assessment of what happens as a result of the school-wide and individual interventions that are used (Far West Laboratory, 1981).

Focus: The concerns and needs of students must be the ultimate focus of any staff development program. Students' needs must be recognized and the impact of staff development activities on students must be taken into consideration (National Inservice Network, 1980). Staff development should exhibit specificity and concreteness in discussion and practice that supports the translation of ideas into practice (Little, 1981).

School Based: School based and school focused staff development is far more effective than other modes of inservice when the goal is long range instructional improvement. Teachers and administrators are more likely to benefit from inservice activities that focus on the general effort of the school than they are from one time, "single shot" programs (Lawrence, Baker, Hansen, and Elzie, 1974).

Training Components: There are many kinds of inservice methods and modes for delivering staff development. Most of these are familiar to educators and have been used in a variety of combinations. There is now enough research to identify clearly the effectiveness of these components. Based on an analysis of over 200 inservice studies, when all of the following components are operating in an inservice program, school change and improvement is most likely to occur:

1. Presentation of theory or description of skills or models of teaching;
2. Modeling or demonstration of skills or models of teaching;
3. Practice in simulated and classroom settings;
4. Structured and open-ended feedback, provision of information about performance;
5. Coaching for application: hands on, in-classroom assistance with the transfer of skills and strategies to classroom.

If any of these components are omitted, the impact of the training will be weakened in the sense that fewer numbers of people will progress to the transfer level -- the only level that has significant meaning for school improvement (Joyce and Showers, 1980).

A summary of the features of effective staff development programs is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

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* COLLABORATION
  Collaboration in organizing and planning staff development increases commitment to make staff development successful.

* PARTICIPATION
  Staff development programs that place administrators, teachers, and parents in an active role are more likely to succeed.

* PLANNING
  Long range planning of staff development increases conformity with school district goals.

* ASSESSMENT
  Staff development is most effective when based on professional needs and concerns of school employees.

* FOCUS
  Successful staff development programs exhibit specificity and concreteness in discussion as well as practice that supports the translation of ideas into practice.

* SCHOOL-BASED
  School-based/school-focused staff development is far more effective than other types of inservice education.

Table 1 (Cont'd)

* TRAINING COMPONENTS
Effective staff development programs contain training that includes presentation of theory, modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching.

Stages of Teacher Career Development

Teacher career development deals with changes teachers experience throughout their careers in: (1) job skills, knowledge and behaviors -- in areas such as teaching methods, discipline strategies, curriculum, planning, rules and procedures; (2) attitudes and outlooks -- in areas such as images of teaching, professional confidence and maturity, willingness to try new teaching methods, satisfactions, concerns, values, and beliefs; and (3) job events -- in areas such as changes in grade level, school, or district; involvement in additional professional responsibilities, and age of entry and retirement.

A number of research studies indicate that preservice and inservice teachers experience change that follows a regular developmental pattern. Fuller and Bown (1975) identified four stages of concerns in the process of becoming a teacher after reviewing research by Fuller and others: (1) preteaching concerns, (2) early concerns about self, (3) teaching situation concerns, and (4) concerns about pupils. Fuller (1969, 1970) proposed three phases of teacher development. The three phases of concerns were with: (1) self, (2) self as teacher, and (3) pupils.

Evidence for three stages of development in the early part of a teaching career was reported by Burden (1979, 1980) from an interview study with experienced teachers. Briefly stated, stage I, a survival stage, occurred during the first year of teaching. The teachers reported their limited knowledge of teaching activities and environment; they were subject-centered and felt they

had little professional insight; they lacked confidence and were unwilling to try new methods; they found themselves conforming to their preconceived image of "teacher."

Stage II, an adjustment stage, occurred for these teachers in the second through fourth years. The teachers reported that during this period they were learning a great deal about planning and organization about children, curriculum and methods. They started to see complexities of children and sought new teaching techniques to meet the wider range of needs they were seeing. The teachers became more open and genuine with children and felt they were meeting children's needs more capably. The teachers gradually gained confidence in themselves.

Stage III, the mature stage, was comprised of the fifth and subsequent years of teaching. Teachers in this stage felt they had a good command of teaching activities and the environment. They were more child-centered, felt confident and secure, and were willing to try new teaching methods. They found they had gradually abandoned their image of "teacher," had gained professional insight and felt they could handle most new situations that might arise.

McDonald (1982) suggested four stages in the professional development of a teacher: (1) transition stage -- where there is a low sense of efficacy; elemental teaching; learning about pupils; learning basic skills of managing and organizing, (2) exploring stage -- where there is a sense of efficacy in using basic skills of teaching; manages instruction effectively, (3) invention and experimenting stage -- where the teacher tries major strategies, invents new strategies and techniques, seeks opportunities for development, and is developing critical judgment, and (4) professional teaching stage -- where the teacher has problem-solving skill and is able to teach other teachers and be creative.

Newman (1978) obtained middle-aged experienced teachers' perceptions of their career development in an interview study and identified stages of career

development for each decade of the teaching career reflecting changes in attitudes, satisfactions, mobility and professional behaviors. Three attitudinal phases of teacher career development were reported in a study of 50 retired teachers conducted by Peterson (1978). Other research studies which have examined only part of the teachers' careers (e.g., only the first year or the first few years) seem to confirm the stages of teacher career development reported in all the above studies.

Other studies on the process of becoming a teacher deal with the socialization of teachers (Sacks and Harrington, 1982; Sitter, 1982; Egan, 1982) and longitudinal studies of teachers through their first 5 to 7 years of teaching (Adams, Hutchinson, and Martray, 1981; Adams, 1982, Ayers, 1980).

Based on their work with preservice and inservice teachers, additional descriptions of career stages have been suggested by several authors. Katz (1972) described four developmental stages of preschool teachers along with the training needs at each stage: Stage I - survival, Stage II - consolidation, Stage III - renewal, and Stage IV - maturity. Gregorc (1973) reported on observations of high school teachers and identified four stages of teacher development: (1) becoming stage, (2) growing stage, (3) maturing stage, and (4) fully functioning professional. Unruh and Turner (1970) identified three stages of a teacher's career: (1) the initial teaching period, (2) the period of building security, and (3) the maturity period. Watts (1980) described three stages of teacher development as: (1) the survival or beginning stage, (2) the middle stage, and (3) the mastery stage. Easterly, Williston, and Allen (1982) and Yarger and Mertens (1979) also have identified stages in teachers' development.

Some researchers and theorists such as Piaget, Kohlberg, Hunt, Sprinthall, Loevinger, and Perry view adult development in a definite progression from

concrete, undifferentiating, simple, structured individuals to more abstract, differentiating, complex, autonomous yet interdependent individuals. Bents and Howey (1981) review studies that indicate that teachers undergo similar changes.

Recommendations

The premise that the stages of teacher development are important in planning effective professional development programs is well accepted in the literature (Andrews, Houston, and Bryant, 1981; Bents and Howey, 1981; Brundage and MacKerscher, 1980; Burden, 1982, and Hall and Loucks, 1978).

Bents and Howey (1981), after reviewing the work of Hunt (1966, 1971) and Hunt and Sullivan (1974) on developmental growth, suggested that staff development programs could be tailored to individual developmental needs and specific learning styles. Less developmentally mature teachers would profit most from highly structured environments, and more developmentally mature teachers could profit from either high or low structured environments. Wilsey and Killion (1982) outlined stages of teacher development and suggested different staff development content and delivery approaches for each stage. Glickman (1981) discussed this issue from a developmental supervision perspective. Christensen, Burke, and Fessler (1983) reviewed a number of studies related to teacher life-span development and reported different teacher characteristics and different staff development needs at each career stage.

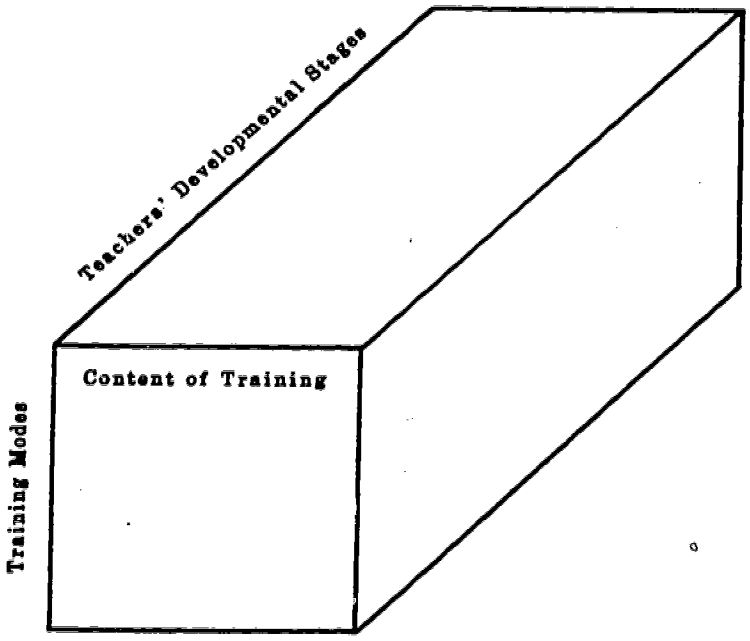
In these studies, there are many similarities in the recommendations to match staff development content and delivery modes to the teachers' stage of development. In general, teachers in the early stages need much assistance with the technical skills of teaching and would benefit most from a highly structured, directive staff development program. Practical information and applications would be most useful. Teachers who are a little more advanced

developmentally would seek information to add variety in their teaching and would prefer a collaborative approach to staff development and supervision. Teachers at the highest developmental levels would focus on more complex and cross-cutting concerns and would prefer more team types of arrangements and staff development programs that are non-directive. Santmire's (1979) recommendations for four levels of the Conceptual Systems Theory provide additional details when considering different staff development content and delivery modes to match teachers at different developmental stages.

The relationship between teachers' developmental stages and staff development content and delivery modes can be illustrated schematically (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Relationships Between
Teachers Developmental Stages
and
Training Content and Delivery



In the figure, the teachers' developmental stage plane represents the stages that teachers might advance through, from the early survival stage to the advanced, mature stage. The content plane represents the content in staff development programs that would be offered. The delivery mode plane represents the type of supervisory or administrative approach that would be used in delivering the staff development program. This approach may range from a directive to a collaborative to a non-directive supervisory or administrative style. Also within this delivery mode plane, staff developers could use telling, modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching.

To illustrate the concepts expressed in the figure, the topic of media use in instruction might be the content of a particular staff development program. Teachers at all stages of development might be interested in that topic but, based on the different developmental characteristics of teachers at each stage, the program should be offered with a variety of delivery modes. Three different programs could be offered on the topic -- one with a directive delivery approach, one with a collaborative delivery approach, and one with a non-directive approach. Teachers could select the program with the type of delivery approach that is best suited to them.

The research in staff development and in teacher career development provides useful information so that staff development programs can be tailored to accommodate teachers' needs at different career stages. By offering more comprehensive staff development programs using these guidelines, the potential exists to help teachers become more effective through well designed programs.

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