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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the discourse and content of a staff development process designed to introduce research-based understandings of reading comprehension into teachers' thinking and practices. Thirty-nine fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade teachers in the Southwest participated in videotaped staff development workshops. Results indicated that creating an empowering educational environment in which the participants own the content of the process takes time, and involves breaking norms related to the expectations for the staff development process, on both the staff developers' and teachers' part, and towards teachers talking about beliefs and practices with their fellow teachers. Results further indicated that lecture 2 (a formal presentation about a practice that grows out of a discussion, and is not prepared for in advance) was the most effective means of introducing new knowledge and practices into the conversation, and suggests that the staff developer must have an enormous amount of content knowledge at his or her fingertips, and be prepared to present it extemporaneously. (Four figures and 2 tables of data are included; 32 references and 1 appendix detailing a conversation by participants are attached.) (PRA)

THE ROLE OF THEORY IN DESCRIPTIONS OF CLASSROOM PRACTICES[1]

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe an analysis of the discourse and content of a staff development process designed to introduce research-based understandings of reading comprehension into teachers' thinking and practices. This staff development process constituted the third phase of a project that explored the degree to which teachers of reading comprehension use research-based practices, barriers that keep them from doing so, and ways of improving the process.[2]

The first phase involved a massive review of the reading comprehension research that identified, described and judged the quality of research-based instructional practices (Anders and Lloyd, In Preparation). The second phase explored the beliefs about and practices in the teaching of reading comprehension of 39 Grade 4, 5 and 6 teachers, and the degree to which school factors affected their beliefs and practices.

Our initial results indicated that teachers do use many practices that resemble those tested in or extracted from studies of reading comprehension (Mitchell, et al, 1988), but embed them within their own theories, thus altering the nature of the practices (Richardson, in press). We found a relatively strong relationship between teachers' beliefs about reading, and their classroom practices (Richardson, Anders, Lloyd & Tidwell, 1990). Further, a case study of a teacher whose beliefs, as elicited in an extensive belief interview, did not predict her practices very well indicated that the teacher was in the process of changing her beliefs and practices. In this case, changes in beliefs were preceding changes in practices (Richardson, et al, 1990).

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[1]Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April, 1990.

These results and other recent research on changes in teachers' practices (for example, Hollingsworth, 1990; Munby, 1983, Russell & Johnson, 1987) suggest that theories should be accounted for when research-based practices are presented to teachers--both the theories related to the practices from the literature, and the teachers' own theories. Additional research suggests that the school context should also be considered in conducting a staff development program (Griffin, 1983; Little and Bird, 1983, Rosenholtz, Basler & Dempsey, 1986). Thus the staff development process planned for in this program contained the following aspects: individual and group level work; and discussions of practices embedded in participants' and research-based knowledge and theory.

Theoretical Basis for Staff Development

The theoretical framework that guided the development of the staff development process was Fenstermacher's (1986) concept of practical arguments. The original notion of practical arguments is found in Aristotle's work and suggests that a practical argument consists of a set of premises that lead to an action. This was adapted in recent times for educational purposes by Tom Green (1976) who argued that the purpose of teaching is "to change the truth value of the premises of the practical argument in the mind of the child, or to complete or modify those premises or to introduce an altogether new premise into the practical argument in the mind of the child" (p. 252). Fenstermacher (1979) modified this further to suggest that the value of research on teaching is to change or modify the premises in the minds of teachers, and thus their actions. Fenstermacher suggested that research could be introduced to teachers by encouraging them to examine their own empirical and value premises in relation to those extracted from current research. Such a process, he hypothesized, would allow teachers to alter the truth value of their premises.

Fenstermacher's notion of practical arguments guided the development of a staff development process that operated at both the individual and school levels. A thorough description of the staff development processes may be found in Hamilton (1989). This paper will focus on the discourse and content of the group level staff development processes in two schools.

The goal of the staff development process was to develop an environment that would allow teachers to examine the explanations for their practices in relation to empirical premises and practices drawn from current research. Explanations for a particular practice consist of a set of statements of beliefs about teaching and learning that may be placed within the analytic framework of a practical argument. A practical argument is a set of empirical, value, situational, and stipulative premises that end in an action. It was thought that when a teacher reveals an empirical premise, it could be discussed in terms of alternative empirical premises as derived from recent

research on reading comprehension. In this process, the teacher may alter premises and/or adopt new ones, and thus reconsider and change classroom practices.

The group level process was designed as a constructivist activity in which the content or curriculum consisted of teachers' cognitions and beliefs about their practices, and current research on reading comprehension. The purpose was to provide an environment in which a group of teachers could explore these together. We understood that two aspects of school life would work against the development of this environment. The first relates to what Lortie (1973) described as an element in the ethos of school faculties, the individualism norm. This norm implies little reliance on others for sources of knowledge, skills, or experience except during the first two years (Fuchs, 1969). The group process was therefore designed to introduce a process and create an environment that permitted teachers to discuss practices and their justifications among themselves; and we hoped that this process would become a norm within the school.

The second potential problem relates to the type of staff development programs to which teachers have become accustomed. In these typical top-down programs, the staff developer talks about, perhaps models, a new practice; and the teachers are free to decide whether or not to implement the practice, and if tried, whether or not to continue it. While teachers often complain about this type of staff development process (Howey & Vaughan, 1983), it is, nonetheless, low risk. The staff development process described in this paper was high risk, because it relied on teachers talking with their fellow teachers about their own practices and beliefs.

Little in the staff development literature provided guidance for the type of group process we envisioned. We wished to create a process that was neither top-down nor bottom-up, but allowed for the introduction of a specific knowledge and ways of thinking that were "new" to at least some of the participants. A number of bottom-up staff development programs presented us with a sense that such programs were possible and useful. We were drawn to a number of recently described bottom-up programs such as the work conducted under the rubric of Organizational Development (Deal & Derr, 1980) which is a problem solving process focussing on issues identified by a school staff. Another was Duckworth and Bamberger's (Duckworth, 1986 & 1988) work with teachers in the Cambridge area which asked a group of teachers to pursue a scientific problem over a period of time in an attempt to provide an environment in which the teacher participants could develop personal theories concerning the phenomena they were studying. A third approach was the IR&DT process (Griffin, Ward & Tikinoff, 1981) in which teachers in a school, with the guidance of a researcher/consultant, conducted action research around a problem of concern to them. And a fourth was the critical reflection or emancipatory action research process at Deakin University, Australia, and described by Kemmis (1987). In this program, a community of practitioners met to examine "their own practices,

understandings and situations which becomes the subject and object of critical reflection; and systematically changing their own practice is one of the primary means by which they act to change the situations in which they work" (p. 77). We were very interested in an empowering, democratic staff development process; however, the staff developers had a specialized knowledge, current research on reading comprehension, and a conscious intention to inject that knowledge into the conversation. We felt that this intention would make a bottom-up process difficult if not impossible to implement, at least initially.

Purposes of the Research:

The staff development sessions were conducted three times per month in School A (a total of 11 sessions), and were held after school in the school library. In School F, the staff development sessions were held one afternoon a month (a total of 8 sessions) in the home of one of the staff developers. In School A, the teachers were offered either 3 credit hours of graduate work or the equivalent funds to participate. In School F, the teachers opted for the funds to pay for substitute teachers. Each session was videotaped, which afforded us the opportunity to analyze the discourse to determine the nature of the conversation around theory and practice.

This paper addresses the following questions:

In a staff development program designed to introduce teachers to current research on reading comprehension in a constructivist manner,

- What percentage of the conversation was controlled by the staff developers and the teachers? Were there differences from one session to the next? Between the schools?

- What was the content of the staff development sessions. What were the themes of conversation and whose were they?

- How were classroom practices introduced into the conversation? Who introduced them? What additional conversation ensued from the discussion of a practice? Were the described practices embedded in theory?

Of particular interest to us as staff developers was to look closely at the differences between the schools. The sense of frustration around the sessions in School A was extremely high. The phenomenological sense of the sessions "not working" was strong. While many factors could account for these differences in the sessions between School A and School F (see Hamilton, 1990), we were particularly interested in operationalizing "not

working" by examining differences in discourse style between the two schools.

THE STUDY

The Setting:

The two schools were located in a large school district in the Southwest. They were selected initially on the basis of reputation for willingness to change and absence of other major staff development programs in grades 4, 5 and 6. Meetings were held with the faculties to determine whether they would be interested in participating, and their degree of commitment to the three-year process (only one of which involved the staff development).

School A was located in a quiet suburban neighborhood of modest ranch-style homes and new development on the very edge of town. There were 380 students in the first year of our study and 440 students the second, 50% of whom were Hispanic, 47% Anglo, and 1% each Black, Asian and Native American.

The original building of School F was built in 1929, and the school was located on a fairly busy mid-town street which had once been residential, but was lately shifting toward small business, apartments and office buildings. There were 360 students in the school. The primary grades were under a desegregation arrangements, and the ethnic mix in these grades was 35% Hispanic and Black and 65% Anglo. Its minority population fell to 10-12% in Grades 4-6. The Principal described the neighborhood as being in "economic decline": working class and highly mobile.

The Participants:

All grades 4, 5 and 6 teachers in both schools participated in the staff development. In addition, an LD teacher in each school was involved, and in School F, the curriculum specialist attended the sessions. The School A principal attended from time to time. In school A, the six teachers consisted of 3 females and 3 males. All five teachers and the curriculum coordinator in school F were female. The years of experience ranged from 1 to 16 in School A, and from 8 to 32 in School F.

There were two primary staff developers, one with an expertise in reading comprehension, and one in teaching and teacher education. In addition, four graduate students were involved in the process, and contributed from time to time as staff developers.

Research Procedure:

The data consisted of videotapes of the group sessions ranging from 2 to 3 hours, each. In addition, the materials that were handed out at the meetings, and the videotapes that were

presented at the sessions were maintained.

The analysis of the tapes was initially guided only by the overall intent of the staff developers: discussion of reading comprehension instruction premises, and presentation and discussion of practices and their theoretical and empirical justifications by both teachers and staff developers. We, therefore, followed the less structured ethnographic analysis approaches as described by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), and Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Three staff developers who had been involved in the process viewed several tapes and met together to develop categories with which the discourse could be described. A system was developed, experimented with, and then altered. The analyses were then conducted on the videotapes of all of the sessions, with periodic meetings of the analysts who would view a tape together and revisit the meaning of the categories. A page of analysis is shown in Figure 1. As seen in Figure 1, the categories consisted of: topic of the conversation, the counter number on the videotape machine to obtain a sense of the length of time the group engaged in a particular conversation, the impetus for the particular topic (e.g., it was on the agenda, or based on a comment by a preceding speaker), who initiated it, the nature of the conversation, the discourse mode, and participation level.

Figure 1 Here

When a practice or activity was described by a participant, a separate form would be used. Recorded on this form was an activity description, who described it, the quality of the description in terms of theory and/or research justification, the types of questions/comments from the group, and whether there was subsequent follow-up or comments related to the activity. This form is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Here

As we began to analyze the ways in which ideas were presented, five categories emerged from the data, and were subsequently used to describe the discourse mode of the presentations: the 6th category displayed in Figure 1. These were:

> Sharing: This comes about when one participant is reminded of something s/he does or has done in the past, and talks about it with the rest of the participants. It usually is described in a personal, at times hesitant manner.
>
> Show and Tell: A participant does something during the week, and prepares to talk about it at the session. S/he often brings in some material to back it up--some of the students' work, or a chart.

Lecture 1: This is a prepared presentation about an activity extracted from the literature or from observation. It is not generally described as something the presenter does or did. It is presented in a depersonalized manner.

Lecture 2. This is a formal presentation about a practice that grows out of a discussion, and is not prepared for in advance. It is, however, depersonalized.

A New Suggestion: A "new" practice emerges out of the conversation--something that the participants could try.

The data sheets constituted our secondary data source, and the subsequent analyses were generated from these.

THE FINDINGS

Staff Developer and Teacher Talk:

One goal of the staff developers was to the present research-based practices, but only when asked to by the teacher participants, or embedded within a conversation on a related topic. The ideal discourse contemplated was that the staff developers would move from being "in charge" to being consultant-participants, with the conversation controlled by all participants. It was felt that discussions should focus not on the staff developers' questions and comments, but on the teachers' own. By examining the categories related to who initiated the conversation, the impetus for and the nature of the conversation it was possible to categorize the conversation in the following manner: Staff Developer Talk, Staff Developer Initiated Teacher Talk (SDITT); Teacher Initiated Teacher Talk (TITT); Discussion. Staff developer initiated teacher talk involved teachers responding to questions or prompts from the staff developers; whereas teacher initiated teacher talk involved spontaneous or other-teacher prompted teacher talk.In addition, it was possible, by looking at the tape counter information to determine the percentage of talk in each session within each of these categories.

The information in Table 1 presents the percentage of time devoted to the categories in each of the staff development sessions.[3]

Table 1

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[3]There were few sessions for School B since the sessions were longer. Percentages are provided rather than absolute numbers since the counters on the different videotape machines used in the analyses related to different measures and were thus not comparable.

Sessions two and three at School A had a relatively high percentage of SDITT; perhaps this is what led to the staff developers feeling that the sessions were not working because it was like "pulling teeth" to get the teachers to talk.

The percentage of SDITT was consistently higher in School A than in School F, except for the first session; and did not decrease in School A until the "make or break" session 9. The session following this one involved a confrontation between the staff developers and teachers concerning the purposes of the staff development and the style of the staff developers. As Hamilton (1990) described, the staff development in School A shifted from the breakthrough to the empowerment stage at that point: the stage in which the "teachers claimed ownership of the staff development itself" (p. 4). That shift had occurred much earlier in School F, with very little trauma on either the teachers' or staff developers' part, as indicated by a steady decrease in Staff Developer talk and an increase in TITT and Discussion from Session 5 on.

Content of Sessions

While the teaching of reading comprehension was the stated content of the staff development, the conversation often moved away from reading comprehension practices and their justifications into two additional areas: writing and other language arts, and testing/assessment and grading. The time spent on the latter was quite surprising to the staff developers, and led to a certain degree of frustration; and yet, since assessment was very much a part of what teachers considered problematic about the teaching of reading comprehension, this was clearly a topic that had to be addressed in a staff development program designed as constructivist.

To provide a sense of the flow of a conversation, Figure 3 presents a topic map for Session 2 in School F. The first column describes the major topics and subtopics under it. The second column names the initiator of the topic in terms of Teacher 1-7 and Staff Developer 1, or 2. The third column describes the discourse mode, and the fourth, what type of conversation, if any, followed.

Figure 3

In this session, the staff developers started off with a planned activity designed to develop an understanding about the various types of reading activities and their purposes. This was accomplished through brainstorming. This activity was interrupted with a teacher sharing a practice to illustrate a purpose. The brainstorming session then shifted to a lengthy topic on assessment, starting with a short question/answer session by the second staff developer (SD2). This elicited the sharing of practices by two teachers, and a trend begun by the first staff

developer (SD1) to embed the shared practice in a theoretical framework by redescribing it. It is also possible to note, in this section, the difference in style between SD1, the reading specialist, and SD2, the teaching specialist. SD1 uses Lecture 1 and Lecture 2, primarily; whereas SD2 uses a question/answer discourse style.

The conversation then moves to Basals and their alternatives, and then back to assessment. A teacher then asks about grade level: what is it, and who decides?; and then to phonics and background knowledge. Again, the conversation focusses on assessment, and the external barriers of school district requirements. The last conversation focusses on the agenda; what the teachers would explore during the coming three weeks, and discuss during the next session.

Anders, Richardson and Morgan (1989) describe, in depth, the amount of time over all sessions spent on the topic of assessment. At both schools, approximately 20% of the discourse time was devoted to issues surrounding grading, testing and assessment. In School A, all but 4 of the 11 sessions had a high proportion of time devoted to the topic, and in School F, all but one of the eight sessions contained conversation related to testing.

In addition, a major topic that emerged often in both schools related to the use of literature in the reading program. Both of these topics were of some surprise to the staff developers, particularly because the research review had focussed on a more narrow definition of reading comprehension and thus did not address issues of assessment or use of literature in teaching reading[4].

The major themes throughout the two staff development programs, and their initiators were:

Staff Developer Initiated:

- Problems with Basals: How do the skills activities relate to reading? The differences between basal passages and authentic literature; How is readability decided?
  - -- Whose questions are being asked in the comprehension check section? (This topic was taken over by one of the teachers in School A.)
- A constructivist view of the reading process, particularly as demonstrated through the concepts of background knowledge, concept mapping and brainstorming.

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[4]There were several factors contributing to this interest: a strong movement within the school district to move to literature in the primary grades; and a growing "grass roots" movement toward whole language in the teaching of literacy.

Teacher Initiated:

- The use of literature in teaching reading comprehension.
- Barriers to different ways of teaching reading because of grading and testing requirements.

The staff developers stated to the teachers at the beginning of the sessions that they were not promoting one way or another to teach reading, but were hoping to help teachers become better at what they were doing within their own belief frameworks. However, an analysis of the tapes indicates a clear preference toward an interactive view of the reading process; and a decidedly anti-basal-reader sentiment on the part of the staff developers.

Descriptions of Practices:

At the beginning of the staff development, the staff developers handed out a categorization of the practices that emerged from the literature review, and short descriptions of the categories. They were prepared to describe (and perhaps model in the teachers' classrooms) any of the practices and their research bases in which the teachers expressed an interest. In neither school did the teachers select practices from the list for explanation (see Richardson, In Press). They did express interest in literature groups, a practice not on the list; and, from time to time, were asked if they would like to learn about an approach, specifically mapping and brainstorming--a procedure that one of the staff developers had quite recently developed and studied. On the other hand, the teachers, themselves, seemed more than willing to share a number of practices with the group.

Table 2 Here

Table 2 presents the numbers of practices that were described in each of the staff development sessions, whether teachers or staff developers presented them, and the discourse style of presentation. Overall, the teachers presented 66 practices, whereas the staff developers presented 33. Forty of the practices were presented in School A, and 26 in School B. The difference between schools appears to be related to the attempt by the Staff Developers to engage the teachers in talk by asking them what had been going on in their classrooms that week. This request turned into a "show and tell" pattern. Most of the staff developer presentations were in Lecture 1 or Lecture 2 style; that is, planned presentations, or lecture-like presentations that emerged from the discussion.

In analyzing the follow-up to practice description, some significant differences emerged. Figure 4 summarizes these differences. When sharing a practice was embedded within a

conversation, the interest was intense, with participants "leaning into" the conversation. Several times, however, the topic of a shared practice seemed inappropriate to the content of the conversation. In such a case, the reaction was polite, but non-engaged. The reaction to Show and Tell presentations depended upon the teacher presenting the practice. In the case of one teacher (Ab), his show and tell presentations were largely ignored except by the staff developers; for another teacher (Fd), they were listened to carefully, and numerous questions and discussion followed.

Figure 4 Here

For both Lectures 1 and 2, the teachers would lean back, and some would begin to take notes. However, there was much more animated discussion following Lecture 2 than Lecture 1. Questions following Lecture 1, by a large, related to management. For example, in a Lecture 1 description of literature groups, the questions revolved around how to obtain complete sets of literature books; how to ensure that all students kept up with the reading, etc. The Lecture 2 discussion, however, would revolve around theory and practice; the why's of a practice. Discussions and conversations were lengthier following Lecture 2 presentations.

The quality of the presentations differed substantially in terms of the degree to which the practices were related to theory and research. By and large, when either staff developers or teachers shared a practice, they did not discuss theory or research except possibly the outcomes of the particular practice. One role of the staff developer that emerged in the first several sessions was to follow a shared practice with a restatement of it within a theoretical framework. This happened even when one of the presenters was a staff developer: Another staff developer or a teacher would embed the practice within a theoretical framework. For example, one Staff Developer shared a journal writing practice with the group. SD1 subsequently talked about the empirical work around journal writing.

The Staff Developers' Lecture 1 and 2 presentations were always strong in their reference to theory and research, and often the teachers' were as well. Show and Tell presentations seldom related to theory, but often did to empirical results.

INTERPRETATION

The analysis of the discourse data of the group staff development process contained several surprises and illuminated the difficulty in implementing a constructivist-empowering staff development process with a preconceived content.

One surprise related to the number of practices described by the teachers in comparison to those described by the staff developers. The staff developers had a "shopping bag" full of research-based practices; in fact, there were 89 categories of

practices, some with a large number of tested procedures. We resisted attempts to "just present a practice" without the teachers expressing an interest in or a problem with a particular area. This, perhaps, was the most difficult aspect of our work with School A. Dialogues similar to this one occured a number of times:

T: Just tell us about a neat practice--something you think is a good idea.

SD1: That's not the purpose of this staff development. The purpose is to focus on your problems, frustrations, and practices; or you may select, together, an area that you all are interested in learning more about, and we can talk about a variety of practices related to that area; then you may select one or two to pursue.

T: Ya, but you know the neat and new ones; the ones you think we should be doing.

We were considered the University people: "You people at the University have the time to go to the library and figure these things out; then you can just come and tell us what we should do" (Af). While this pressure did not occur as much in School F, the Curriculum Coordinator suggested to us several times that we should probably have more "things" for them to walk away with. She was referring to xeroxed copies of short statements about practices and steps for a implementing them. We resisted these demands; but found it awkward to do so. Interestingly, the few times we succumbed and presented practices related to mapping and brainstorming, these were not readily implemented.

The discourse style of many of the practices presented by the teachers was sharing. This style elicited active involvement from the rest of the teachers, and considerable discussion. It was interesting to note that when either the teachers or the staff developers shared a practice, the presentation did not usually include reference to research or theory. It evolved to the staff developer, and sometimes another teacher, to relate the shared practice to theory or research.

Since the teachers did not select practices from the list they had received, the staff developers seldom gave Lecture 1 presentations. Those that we presented in this style were received with a change in body posture and questions related to how to implement them in the classroom: typical of the way in which such presentations are received in top-down staff development sessions. On the other hand, Lecture 2 presentations seemed to "work" within our goals for the discourse. These presentations emerged out of the conversation, were embedded in theory and research and were not planned. They were attended to in a similar manner to sharing style, except that some teachers took notes. Discussions concerning research and theory followed the Lecture 2 presentatons. Thus, we view Lecture 2 presentations

to be the style of presentation that best met the goals of this type of staff development process.

Discussions were always well received by the staff developers. However, we wished to move away from the type of discussion in which we were the switchboards; that is, in which the teachers were addressing their comments to us as the experts rather than to the group or to each other. A conversation which approached our ideal is presented in Appendix 1. This was a part of Session 11 at School A; the session which Hamilton (1989) described as "empowerment". While we had tried to deal, several times, with the question of where meaning resides--in the book, or somewhere between the book and the mind of the reader, we dealt with it in depth in this session. In this conversation, everyone became both learner and teacher. Teacher Aa was deeply concerned about a constructivist view of reading, and articulated his opinions strongly and clearly; whereas the staff developer represented a constructivist view, and teacher Af tried to pull the two views together. It is not clear that anyone changed their basic position, but they certainly deepened their understanding of their own positions. For the staff developers, this was the ideal conversation--the type of conversation toward which we had been working.

How could this have come about earlier? A useful framework for understanding what we were trying to do with our group process, and why we had trouble with it, is described by Sirotnick and Oakes (In Press) as critical inquiry. They refer to Habermas (1971 & 1979) and Friere (1983) and other critical theorists who develop the notion of critical inquiry at the school level that involves the participants in an examination of their beliefs and assumptions, with the ultimate goal being awareness and empowerment and ultimately social justice.

While the ideal conversation would entail a balance of power among the participants of such a conversation, Friere (1983) addresses the issue of why it is sometimes necessary for an educative intervention to take place, even though it sets up an initial teacher-learner dichotomy. He suggests that such a process requires a "self-effacing" stance on the part of the teacher, such that the teacher is part teacher and part learner. This is similar to Little and Bird's (1983) suggestion that there should be reciprocal learning in an observation/supervision situations, and the supervisor must offer analysis and suggestions in a humble manner.

In our staff development process, we were viewed as the experts, in that we held the knowledge related to the subject matter of the staff development process. This sense of our being experts was held more strongly by the teachers in School A than School F, perhaps because the School A teachers were less experienced. Anyon (1981) experienced such a difference in teacher response to her presence in the school she classified as middle-class, as compared to the teachers in the working-class, affluent and executive elitist schools. She described the fifth-grade teachers in the middle class school as viewing her as "an

expert who had the correct answers regarding child development, curriculum, and discipline" (p. 39). The demographic characteristics and school norms in Anyon's school were similar to those in School A.

In addition, however, we were ambivalent about our role. On the one hand, we wanted the staff development process to become owned by the teachers; on the other, we wanted the conversation to focus on our content. In the initial sessions in School A, our frustration with being placed in the "expert" role, as well as that related to the teachers' seeming inability to shake loose from barriers such as testing, was sometimes evident on the videotapes. We challenged, pushed, frowned and sighed. In so doing we probably delayed the onset of the empowerment phase.

On the other hand, our sense of the sessions "working" and "not working" in School A may not be related to the eventual outcomes of the staff development process. Preliminary analysis of teacher belief changes indicates that School A teachers changed as much as School F teachers (Hamilton, 1989). Further, there is preliminary evidence that teachers in school A changed practices as much or more than those in School F. Many factors beyond those of the staff development process could account for these changes. However, it would appear that our sense of the process "working" or not did not predict the outcomes of the process. It seemed to relate to a comfort level with a process in relation to expectations for participation, rather than to the outcomes of a process.

IMPLICATIONS

The Content/Empowerment Tension:

One element of creating an empowering educational environment is to ensure that the participants own the content of the process. In terms of this staff development, there were two pressures working against participant ownership. One related the staff developers themselves, who held knowledge that they intended to bring up in conversation; and one related to the participants who viewed the staff developers as experts and were used to a staff development processes which they did not own.

In both schools, it was possible to reach the stage in which teachers owned the content, but it took some time, and in the case of one school, a difficult confrontation between the participants and staff developers. Thus, the development of such a process takes time, and involves breaking norms related to expectations for the staff development process, on both the staff developers and teachers' part, and toward teachers talking about beliefs and practices with their fellow teachers.

The Role of the Staff Developer:

The staff developer has a critical role in the process of creating and maintaining a constructivist and empowering process

that has a specific content as its focus. Our data indicate that Lecture 2 is the most effective means of introducing new knowledge and practices into the conversation. This suggests that the staff developer must have an enormous amount of content knowledge at his/her fingertips, and be prepared to present it extemporaneously. In addition, Friere's suggestion that the staff developer should be self-effacing, and be a teacher-learner, indicates a particular style that may be difficult for everyone to attain.

Research Methodology:

Much of the work in this paper could not have been accomplished without the active involvement of the staff developers in the research process. Many of the categories of discourse required knowledge of intention. For example, in order to identify Lecture 1 and Lecture 2, it was necessary to know what had been planned for the session. And in order to determine when the staff developer became teacher-learner, it was necessary to understand whether a question was genuine or a recitation-type question. The experience of being both a participant in a process and a research of its discourse leads me to question the research on teaching that imposes a category system on discourse that assumes an intention on the part of the teacher.

This suggests, then, an important function for the staff developer-research, or teacher educator-researcher; and this study exemplifies a genre of action research in staff development that may only be conducted by or participated in actively by individuals in such a role.

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FIGURE 1

STAFF DEVELOPMENT FORM

SCHOOL A DATE 11/14 SD# 3

TOPIC	COUNTER	IMPETUS	WHO INITIATES	NATURE OF CONVERSATION	DISCOURSE MODE	PARTICIPATION	PRACTICE
→Questioning Strat.	1170	From what Af said	SD2	"What are you doing differently?"			
			Af	Set of questions. Describes. SD2 referred to chart from last week: The Functions of questioning. Added 4th category called motivation. SD1 talks about connecting background knowledge to text. Af insists its really motivation.	Sharing Discussion	Listening. Ac & Ag make fun of either Sd2's or Af's hand motions	Questioning Strategies
→Reading questions first	1450	Responding to something SD2 says	Af	Af: Of course you read the question first. & other things to preview story. SD2: Convergent/Divergent thinking. Whose questions? Af: Finds that kids answer questions from their own purposes and may seem off the qall. Some answers in teachers' guide are terrible. They all like the open-ended questions. SD2 talks about publishers. Ab needs to hear who from the students.	Lecture 1 Much discuss with each other	Intense listening Everyone involved.	
Functions of questions	1840	Back on track & lull in conversation	SD2	Any other functions? Aa asks questions to get kids to stand up for themselves. Describes what he learned. SD2. Any Others? Ag asked lots of questions but it got out of line, so he quit. SD2 responds. Af talks--different functions, e.g. feedback	Sharing & Q/A Sharing One person responds, then another	Rest are listening	
→Students evaluating teacher	2155	From what AF said	SD1	Sharing a practice (one she used)	Sharing	Listening	Students evaluating teachers
Functions of questions	2190	Back to Agenda	SD2	Asks Af about what else he learned. AF "humbles" himself to use basal questions sometimes. SD1 tries to interpret response as function of making a good argument. AF dis agrees & gives eg. to illustrate--to draw a spirit. More positive feedback for others' purposes. Af taped himself.	Q/A Discussion	Listening	

FIGURE 2

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION
FORM

GROUP STAFF DEVELOPMENT

School A Date: 11/14 SD# 3 Counter 1170

PRACTICE: Questioning strategies. Asks students two questions that they have to respond to for each piece of reading--often orally. 1) What do we now know? and 2) What wuestions do we still have?

WHO DESCRIBED: Af

QUALITY OF DESCRIPTIONS: Medium. Theory. Reason to use questions is to get kids connected with their background knowledge, and to give them practice talking out loud.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM GROUP: Clarifying questions, such as When do you ask the questions? Do you do this for every piece of reading?

COMMENT/FOLLOWUP: SD2 refers to chart from last week--functions of questions--and adds a category. Af brings up this or very similar practices several times. She clearly thinks this is an important activity.

FIGURE 3
Topic Map, Session 2: School F

Topic	Initiator	Activity	Follow-Up
1. Reading Activities/ Purposes	SD2	Brainstorming Activity (Recitation)	
->Practice, prereading questions	T	Sharing re prereading questions	leads to recitation
->->Why ask questions	SD2	Recitation	discussion
->What is comprehension	SD2	Q/A, discussion	discussion
->What is reading from kids view	SD2	Q/A	discussion
->What is grammar/word attack skills	SD2	Q/A	discussion
->->Definition of word attack and syntax	SD1	Lecture 2	
->Back to questions on skills/reading	SD2	Q/A	responses
2. Assessment	SD2	Comment, Q/A	discussion
->Writing as assessment	T T	Sharing practice Sharing practice	some questions
->Back to assessment problems discussion	SD2	Q/A	SD1 restating with different language
->->Accountability	T	Discussion, difficult to be accountable	all teachers
->Importance of testing	SD2	Challenge by T	discussion, SD2 and 4 teachers
->2 kinds of validity	SD2	Lecture 2	discussion by all teachers
[Back to 1] ->Purpose of doing grammar, kids can do it, raise self-concept	T	Comment	some discussion

Topic	Initiator	Activity	Follow-Up
[Back to 2] ->Relationship of assessment to accountability	SD2	Q/A and challenge	lots of discussion, all teachers
3. Basals & Alternatives	SD1	Lecture 2. Nature of Basals & publishing industry	discussion of alternatives
->Reading programs	SD1	Lecture 2. All of them need structure	
->Grouping	T	Discussion. (Basals = grouping) literature day	discussion
->->Readability/Reading levels	SD1	Lecture 2. Practice, Joplin plan relies on concept of readability and levels	
->->Different type of grouping	T	Sharing, practice. Pairs of students working together	discussion, SD2 questioning
->Interdiscipline reading strands	T	Discussion—difficult to do	discussion
[Back to 2] ->->How do you assess that	T	Questions	discussion
->->->Delineation between knowledge & process	SD1	Lecture 2	
4. Grade level	T	Question—what grade level and who decides	discussion/ conversation
->Reading level	SD1	Lecture 2. Assumptions in Japan & Finland	
5. Phonics & Background Knowledge	SD1	Lecture 2. Can't sound out a word unless you know it	

Topic	Initiator	Activity	Follow-Up
[Back to 2]	SD2	How to do formative assessment while satisfying accountability	
->Grading listening	T	Question related to how you grade listening	
->District requirements	T	Lecture 2. How the grading works	lots of discussion
->Grading kids with limits (LD)	T	Sharing problems	lots of discussion
6. Agenda	SD1	Q/A Recital. What do we do next time	lots of discussion
->Literature	T T	Suggestion to do this Sharing practice	

TABLE 1
% of Talk Time by Teachers and Staff Developers

Session	School A (in %) SDT	SDITT	TITT	DISC	School F (in %) SDT	SDITT	TITT	DISC
1	66	7	1	25	67	18	0	15
2	22	36	5	37	15	10	13	62
3	23	29	7	41	30	12	16	35
4	61	9	5	25	40	8	27	25
5	28	7	13	51	27	2	17	55
6	9	11	26	54	15	3	25	57
7	27	15	12	44	14	0	12	74
8	23	10	25	42	13	0	14	72
9	9	4	6	80				
10	36	1	31	32				
11	15	5	5	75				

SDT = Staff Developer Talk
SDITT = Staff Developer Initiated Teacher Talk
TITT = Teacher Initiated Teacher Talk
DISC = Discussion

TABLE 2
Presentation of Practices

Session	SCH	Respondent	SH	ST	L1	L2	NW	Total
1	A	Teacher	1	-	-	-	-	1
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	-	-	-
	F	Teacher	1	-	-	-	-	1
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	A	Teacher	3	-	-	-	-	3
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	1	-	1
	F	Teacher	6	-	-	-	-	6
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	2	-	2
3	A	Teacher	2	3	-	-	-	5
		Staff Dev.	2	-	2	1	-	5
	F	Teacher	1	1	-	-	-	2
		Staff Dev.	-	-	1	2	-	3
4	A	Teacher	2	-	-	2	-	4
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	1	-	1
	F	Teacher	2	3	-	-	-	5
		Staff Dev.	-	1	-	1	-	2
5	A	Teacher	-	3	-	-	-	3
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	1	-	1
	F	Teacher	2	1	-	-	-	3
		Staff Dev.	1	-	-	1	-	2
6	A	Teacher	3	2	-	-	2	7
		Staff Dev.	1	-	-	2	-	3
	F	Teacher	2	-	-	-	-	2
		Staff Dev.	1	1	-	1	-	3
7	A	Teacher	1	3	1	-	-	5
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	1	-	1
	F	Teacher	3	-	-	-	-	3
		Staff Dev.	-	-	1	-	1	2
8	A	Teacher	4	1	1	-	-	6
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	-	2	2
	F	Teacher	2	1	-	-	1	4
		Staff Dev.	-	-	1	-	1	2

Session	SCH	Respondent	SH	ST	L1	L2	NW	Total
9	A	Teacher	2	-	-	-	1	3
		Staff Dev.	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	A	Teacher	1	-	-	-	-	1
		Staff Dev.	-	-	2	-	-	2
11	A	Teacher	2	-	-	-	-	2
		Staff Dev.	1	-	-	-	-	1
SUMMARY								
All	A	Teacher	21	12	2	2	3	40
		Staff Dev	4	-	4	7	2	17
All	F	Teacher	19	6	-	-	1	26
		Staff Dev	2	2	3	7	2	16

SCH = School SH = Shared ST = Show and Tell
L1 = Lecture 1 L2 = Lecture 2 NW = New

FIGURE 4
Style of Presentation of Practices

Presentation Style	Theory/Research Embedding	Interest Level/ Style	Follow-up Discourse
Sharing	Low	High--leaning forward	Some discussion
Show and Tell	Low	Polite	Some polite questions
Lecture 1	High	Medium High leaning back taking notes	"How to" questions (management)
Lecture 2	Medium High	High, sometimes taking notes	Considerable discussion, questions
"New" Suggestion	Low	Polite	Little

APPENDIX I
Conversation. Session 11, School A.

T4: To what extent is reading an act of subordination to a given author?" To what extent is the author setting up the control, there is some extent where a reader is subordinated to the wiles of a writer and to a certain extent the reader has to be willing to submit to that and keep reading. I think anybody that has been a writer and writing to a particular audience is keenly aware of the degree to which they are exerting their control over their potential readers. Persuasive papers in particular. Is the reader going to follow me in this direction or are they going to stop and throw the paper down. It seems clear that there is an important control element in there too. Reading does have its inherent disciplines.

SD2: So the student-reader has to submit to the control of the author as well as the control of the teacher?

T4: My question is to what extent does that play a role in this whole thing.

SD1: "I don't know the answer to what you are asking, but what do you mean by, I don't know what you mean when you said reading does have its inherent disciplines."

T4: "Well, there is a sequential discipline clearly, to reading. You read it in a certain order that the author presented to you. At least in some degree."

SD2: "Not every piece of writing."

T4: "To some extent anything. You are not going to open the almanac and start at the end and read backwards."

T2: "My husband, who had trouble in school, he and his friends were stunned in seventh grade when they learned how much easier it was in school if they read all of the words in a sentence from left to right and if they read all of the words on a page. They were seventh graders and to this day he must remind himself to read from the beginning to the end of the sentence. You ought to hang around with people who had a really tough time in school because it is really fun. Just driving down the highway he may pick out a few words on a sign to read but they may not be in the correct order, and you see I do that automatically. He does that if he is not really focusing and he maintains there are lots of kids like that. So exactly right, there is the discipline of going

left to right and from line 1 to line 2."

T4: "Just because he created his own discipline doesn't mean he is undisciplined."

T2: No, it is just they had a theory of reading that wasn't working for them and it was a certain discipline they found that if they followed someone else's theory of reading, he and his friends, then lots of things made more sense and they did better in school. So what seems obvious when you talk to someone that had a terrible time with reading, it doesn't seem so obvious. I think it is a discipline.

T4: But even beyond the syntactical discipline, an author sets a mood that has to be tapped into in order to receive the message the author intended or one of a range of meanings. Possible that someone pick up a message or meaning that the author never intended, but when that happens I think the discipline of reading is breaking down and losing its effectiveness as a communicative tool.

SD3: One of the things that I do is when the kids say a passage or a text has a particular meaning or this is the way they understand it is to ask them to go back to the book and use the authors words to show where they got that meaning. Having the reader find it in the text is one way to connect it with our own experiences, which are varied.

SD2: Can they always find it?

SD3: Can the student always find it, no. Although I think it depends on the student, some students would be able to articulate that. There is a lot of articulation that kids learn in doing this. They learn a whole different vocabulary and a whole way of talking about what they read, because they are not talking about a preconceived answer someone may have.

SD2: "T4, I want to ask you, do you think it is possible for the reader to ever precisely figure out what the author intended?"

T4: "Is it possible for an author to figure out precisely what he intends? No, there is no, I'm not talking about it in the singular. There is no one meaning, that is why I rephrased my comments in terms of a range of meanings. There is always a range."

SD2: Sometimes I am absolutely amazed when somebody reads something I wrote and how they interpret it. I think, wow. And this is a contemporary shared meaning kind of thing and then I think about reading something that is 200 years old

and I really wonder.

T4: But on the other hand, if they read something that you have written and they respond to you in a way, in another way that gives you the impression that they were really tuning in to what you had invested in that, there is a real exhilaration in that, isn't there?

SD2: That has never happened to me (laughter).

T4: That has never happened, uah.

SD2: It is always like there is something really different, some people pick out things that were not a big deal for me when I was writing it. I thought it was almost obvious, however I threw that in there. I mean it is really remarkable.

T2: I think there is something in buying into the author's reality. Sometimes you read something and you won't pick up on something the author didn't intend because their reality, the world they were creating, whether fiction or non-fiction, is so different from what you want or you are in a bad mood. Assuming we are talking about good readers here. There is some way that you don't go into the author's world, so your eyes are going across the page and you don't have a clue what it is saying. As opposed to the person that comes into your world and sees something different from what you intended.

SD2: Yes. It could be my writing and you see (gestures to T4) that is another issue.

T2: But I think it also could be different focusing. A person that was visiting the family this weekend writes plays and novels and such in Denmark. Had a discussion about the author and he felt the only time you should be aware of the author is when you begin to "buy out" of that world. For some reason, when you begin to pull out and question. Whether it is fiction or non-fiction as long as it is real to you, you should be completely oblivious to the author because you are there. When, for some reason, the author's world comes to some disjuncture with what you could make coherent, whether it is your own world or not, you know you just can't make it coherent, then you pull back and say why did the author do that. Or what is going on here or what was the author's intent.

T1: Well, that is political then.

T2: I think that's what political writing is, creating disjunctures, situations that make you take a stance. It was an interesting point of view from an author, he hopes to

write in such a way that his readers forget he is there.

SD1: Can you imagine with your author friend, as long as, as a reader, my biases are being confirmed I don't think about them or challenge them.

SD2, T5 & T2 all oppose this statement.

SD2: I don't think you go along with it because the biases are the same.

T2: I think as long as biases are being stretched in a way that I can stretch. I mean I may get stetched but as long as it is in a way that I can imagine. It is when something comes up that I can't, I can't make the leap. He is not saying that it is a bad thing to make people step back and wonder about it, it is just...You know SD2, the thing we talked about last spring. When I read a book I am really into it, but if you ask me what are you reading before you go to bed at night I would be hard pressed to tell you the title, the author, or the plot. But when I am there it is like totally real and the house could burn down around me. I confessed this to SD2 in my interview last year and she said she did the same thing, and I have felt better ever since.

T4: To give another example, take poetry for a minute. I think one of the big differences in poetry as opposed to prose is that the author of the poetry makes more demands upon the reader to buy in to the mood or the rigor or whatever that has been woven into that poem. You have got to be "more committed to read a poem than to read prose." I think there is a greater degree of discipline there and I think that is why a lot of our children that we teach have a difficult time appreciating poetry. It is just a short little thing, they scan down it and say ok, I have read it. But they have not been willing to submit themselves to the richness that has been tied in in the space of a few verses. They can say I have read it but ok, well...

SD1: "Under what conditions would they be able to tie in to the richness? When would that happen? Are there poems that kids tie in to the richness?"

T4: Well, I think the most successful children's poet lately has been Shel Silverstein. He capitalizes on sensations. I think he capitalizes on the children's appreciation of the grotesque.

T5: Isn't that wonderful(chuckling).

T2: The babysitter.

T4: Things like that. But even there it typically takes, I think they involve themselves better when somebody is reading it to them than when they read it themselves. I think there is still this tendency for students who are unaware of the discipline of reading to just look at that and skim through it without really involving themselves. A lot of it really has to do with slowing down. Let things sink in and not use a regular reading pace. If I used the same, last week I read To Kill a Mockingbird. Now if I used that same pace in reading poetry, like even Robert Frost, it would do me no good. I would be through with it and it would be over, it would be senseless for me to go through it at that same kind of a pace.

SD1: Well , it is true we read different kinds of materials in different ways.

T4: That's another one of the things I am talking about in terms of the discipline of reading. I think that is another aspect, sequentialness might be one, pace might be another one.

SD1: I am unclear whether the meaning for you lies in what the author puts on the page or what the reader constructs or is it something inbetween? I think when you are saying this, I don't think we are talking about the same thing (hand movements to show on different paths.). But that is why I wanted examples of what you meant by disciplines. It sounds to me that for you the meaning is there in the text and you need to get it out, and there might be more than one or two meanings in the text.

T4: I look at it this way; an author, particularly like Robert Frost who is writing poetry and to a lesser extent fiction, they are to some extent like a parable. And a good author, I'm sure, is aware of that as he is writing. That various people are going to approach this at a different level. Moby Dick is a good example. Very few people responded to Herman Melville according to the deeper message that he had in the book. He might have been mildly disappointed but I bet he was thrilled every time he went down to the bank. At least people were buying it and reading it and that was keeping him in business. But when someone showed up that was able to tap into some of the more subtle aspects of his book it would seem sure that he would be appreciative of that and respect the reader that he talked to that he was able to engage those aspects. I think that an author lays a valid claim to certain of the meanings that are communicated through that text.

SD1: In something like Moby Dick I bet he would be surprised sometimes at some of the meanings that people found there.

And he would even say, oh yeah, I hadn't thought of it that way. I mean that is what I hear you (V) saying when somebody talks to you about an article you have written and you didn't even think that was very important. And yet you can see all that they can build out of it.

T2: But wouldn't have liked it also if they had taken a little time and try and be real clear about what it was you were trying to say?

SD2: Yes and no. Because a lot of times I think you are right R, I am surprised at what I say when I go back and read something of mine. You know sometimes construction will happen right as I am writing.

SD1: The ideas come in. Or it might not be all finished yet.

SD2: Right, or it is half way through. I guess what is important to me in what I write is not necessarily located within that written document. So I would like people to think like I am thinking but I realize that from the written document that is not always possible. Yeah, I would like everybody to think like I did when I wrote the document but it is not going to happen.

T4: It is possible.

SD1: I think that is a question, I wonder if it is possible.

SD2: I don't know whether it is or not, I really don't know. My training in literature was a structural approach, which was to come as close to what the author was thinking when the book or poem was written. I bought into the notion that it would be possible to come as close as you can to something that was written 250 years ago, as long as you took all the time in the world. You figured out culturally what was going on in those times. You did structural analysis of the piece. And you could really come close to what that author was thinking and I was convinced of that until I started writing. Then I thought, no one is going to come close to what I am thinking when I write this thing. I mean even me. When I read it two years later it is not even going to be the same. When I read it, something that I have written. At this point I guess I have moved away from the notion that it is possible to get close to what the author was thinking.

T4: What you say scares me because it seems to imply that it is impossible to communicate.

SD2: What I think probably the problem with the other approach is that it is completely relativistic. That there isn't a meaning in a piece of writing. That is where, I think, the

social notion comes across. That you begin to develop a shared notion through the social aspect of reading. But I agree, I think that is part of the problem people have with the notion of constructing meaning is that it all becomes relativistic. Is there a right answer ever.

T2: Isn't it possible that reading is some of each? That reading is set within time constraints and resources to try to and construct the author's meaning or your best guess and then construct you own meaning and also with the people around you. Isn't it possible that reading is all of that, it is such a rich thing.

T4: Put it this way, I would be scared with taking too much of a relativistic approach at say the sixth grade level because the kids might throw up their hands and say well, "poohy." You know, this is a big joke, somebody is writing all this words and there is nothing behind it anyway, you can get whatever you want to out of it. And when you do explain to someone what you got out of it they are just going to laugh at you because ha ha, the joke is on you, there wasn't any meaning here after all. They might get that impression.