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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the question of whether there is a clear destination for the Professional Development School (PDS) movement, examining whether perceived destinations are appropriate. The paper begins by outlining the commonly accepted four-part mission and the characteristics of PDSs; then it summarizes some of what is known about PDS achievements and effectiveness. The paper also examines what is not known about PDSs, including whether PDS work benefits children, whether PDSs increase teacher retention and/or performance, what it costs to operate a PDS, whether PDSs promote and advance equity for all learners, and whether PDSs enable the participation of students, families, and communities in decision making. Finally, the paper uses the discussion of what is known and not known as a lens through which to examine the question of whether it is necessary to refocus, clarify, and possibly modify the destination of PDS work. In considering that question, the paper attempts to situate the question within the context of broad issues of purpose, responsibility, and accountability in PDS work. (Contains 37 references.) (SM)

# The Professional Development School Movement: Is There a Clear Destination? Purpose, Responsibility, and Accountability in PDS Work

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**The Professional Development School Movement:**
**Is There a Clear Destination?**
**Purpose, Responsibility, and Accountability in PDS Work**

Ismat Abdal-Haqq

My talk this morning addresses the question of whether there is a clear destination for the PDS movement. It also addresses the more cogent question of whether perceived destinations are appropriate—that is, when we get to where we think we want to go, what will we have accomplished? Will we have fulfilled the mission that ideally characterizes PDSs? And finally—Qui bono? Who benefits if we do, in fact, reach the destination that we identify?

I begin with a brief outline of the commonly accepted mission and characteristics of professional development schools. I will then summarize some of what we know about professional development school achievements, as well as some of the important issues about which we know little. Finally, I hope to use the discussion of what we do know and what we lack knowledge about as a lens through which to examine the question of whether we need to re-focus, clarify, and possibly modify the destination of PDS work. In considering the final question, I will attempt to situate the question within the context of broad issues of purpose, responsibility, and accountability in PDS work.

The questions and conclusions contained in my remarks are derived from the work I've done over the past eight years as coordinator of the Clinical Schools Clearinghouse, which is based at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in Washington, DC. The clearinghouse was established in 1991 as a national resource center, which collects, generates, and disseminates information on PDSs. We receive inquiries from students; school and college faculty; LEA, state, and federal staffers; journalists, and others. We produce and

disseminate information on PDSs via print and electronic media, workshops, conference sessions, and other activities. That work with the clearinghouse informs the discussion today, as do my reviews of PDS literature; participation in various task forces, working groups, and committees; and conversations with individuals involved in PDS work.

## PDS Mission & Purpose

PDSs have a four-part mission: (1) maximizing student achievement and well-being, (2) initial preparation of teachers and other school-based educators, (3) professional development of practicing teachers and other school-based educators, and (4) applied inquiry designed to improve and support student and educator development (Abdal-Haqq, 1998a). The draft standards for PDSs, developed and now being pilot-tested by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) PDS Standards Project, identify three core commitments shared by PDSs (Levine, 1998, p. 193): "(1) an environment which integrates adult and children's learning; (2) parity for university and school partners on all issues of practice and policy in the PDS; and (3) the simultaneous renewal of the school and the university."

A distinguishing feature of professional development schools is collaboration between the partner institutions. The partners of record in most PDS partnerships are one or more schools, colleges, and departments of education and one or more school districts. In some instances, teachers unions and human service agencies are also partners.

PDSs gained prominence as a vehicle for improving schooling in the United States during the mid-1980s when a number of influential reports and studies of the era highlighted the necessity of linking improvements in teacher education to school reform if substantive improvements in public schooling were to be achieved (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986). Real schools that could provide authentic and effective clinical settings for inducting

new teachers into the profession were seen as a necessary adjunct to renewing teacher education. There was, however, recognition of the fact that placing student teachers or beginning teachers in poor schools would simply reinforce in a new generation of teachers practices that reform-minded individuals considered ineffective. As Judith Lanier, former president of the Holmes Group and former dean of the school of education at Michigan State University, put it in a 1992 address to the AACTE annual meeting, "We cannot educate tomorrow's teachers in today's schools."

Thus, professional development schools, which would provide the clinical settings that married practice to theory for developing teachers, had to be schools that exemplified structures and practices that maximize student achievement and well-being. There was also recognition of the fact that exemplary schools along the lines envisioned by education reformers of the day were not in abundance. Those that came closest to being exemplary were often found in more affluent communities, which were increasingly atypical when compared to the populations and conditions that exist in the majority of urban and rural schools. If PDSs were confined to those exemplary schools, not only would there be a shortage of clinical sites, but resource-poor communities and schools would be denied the benefits of PDS presence, and teachers trained in such settings would be unprepared to work in schools lacking such benign conditions. Therefore, the concept of "exemplary setting" had to be expanded to include schools that were in the process of or working to become restructuring schools—seeking to become "exemplary."

Over the years, a number of terms have emerged for schools embodying the PDS concept and reflecting the PDS mission. They include professional development school, which emerged from the work of the Holmes Group (1986) that led to its first report, *Tomorrow's Teachers*. Other terms include partner school, used widely among the PDSs associated with the Goodlad network (Clark, 1995), the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER); clinical school; and professional practice school. Before the dust settled, after the initial flurry of

interest and activity, there was also some ambiguity about whether a PDS was literally a school or simply an approach to school-university partnership—a place or an idea.

However, there has emerged a general consensus that a PDS is school, operated by a school-university partnership. Some existing partnerships operate only one P-12 school as a PDS while others may have more than 40. The most recent count by the Clinical Schools Clearinghouse indicates that more than 1,035 P-12 schools have been designated as PDSs in 47 states (Abdal-Haqq, 1998b).

## What do we know about PDSs?

### PDS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND EFFECTIVENESS

The sheer proliferation of PDSs during the last decade attests to the confidence that many educators have in their potential. Several states have taken actions that demonstrate support for professional development schools. Although most have not gone as far as Minnesota, which created a statute requiring an internship in a PDS for initial licensure (Minnesota State Board of Teaching, 1994), PDSs have been endorsed as a critical element of teacher education redesign by states such as Maryland (Clemson & Fessler, 1997), and others have received considerable state financial support. For example, the majority of the more than 400 PDSs in Texas were established as part of the state-supported network of Centers for Professional Development of Teachers (Resta, 1998).

Influential policy reports, such as *What Matters Most?*, the report of the National Commission on Teaching for America's Future (Darling-Hammond, 1998), advocate internships in PDSs as part of a multi-dimensional approach to ensuring quality teaching. There is a distinct possibility that PDSs may become a factor in SCDE accreditation for those institutions who

seek NCATE accreditation. The NCATE PDS Standards Project is currently field-testing at 20 sites draft standards for professional development schools (Levine, 1998). These standards are designed to provide developmental guidance and ensure quality control. Finally, an increasing number of partnerships have succeeded in making the PDS model for preservice teacher education the only model offered at a partner SCDE. Thus, we have some evidence that the labor of PDSs advocates and implementers have borne fruit and resulted in PDSs moving from the margins of university and school activity to a more central and conspicuous place on the stage of education reform.

In looking at the outcomes of PDS work, we have more evidence of PDS impact on preservice teacher education than on other aspects of the PDS mission. In general, preservice preparation in PDS settings includes longer, more systematic, coherent, and relevant field experiences than in traditional programs. It is more likely to incorporate research-based practices and structures such as student teacher cohorts, clinical supervision models, and portfolio assessments; and it typically involves shared responsibility, between school and college faculty, for initial preparation. When compared to their peers, graduates of PDS preservice programs report greater confidence in their skills and knowledge, less culture shock when they enter classrooms as professionals, and more support during their initial preparation. We have some evidence that principals and school districts consider PDS graduates to be attractive hires, that graduates perform well on state licensing exams and in the classroom, and are more likely to "hit the ground running" when they begin professional practice.

We also have a number of studies suggesting that practicing teachers in PDS settings experience greater professional growth, more opportunities to exercise leadership, and greater feelings of empowerment, related to their ability to affect their schools and their profession, than teachers in comparable non-PDS settings. There is some evidence that PDSs create conditions that promote a culture of inquiry, investigation, and active, ongoing learning for

school-based educators. [See Abdal-Haqq (1998a) for a discussion of what PDS literature reveals about activities and outcomes related to teacher development.]

There is considerable documentation that the PDS movement has done much to bridge the gap between university- and school-based educators. In their report on the PDSs affiliated with Michigan State University, Judge, Carriedo, and Johnson (1995) stress that "...the PDS is to be, first and foremost, a partnership and not a colonising effort by the university." This collaboration, which is a distinguishing feature of PDSs, is also an enabling condition, which makes it possible to fulfill the mission. We can see the importance that PDS implementers attach to meaningful collaboration in the formal agreements that many partnerships have crafted to enable their work. [See Teitel (1998a) for a discussion of the various institutional arrangements found among PDS partnerships.] Also, the draft standards for PDSs developed by the NCATE PDS Standards Project cite the existence of formal agreements to support parity and collaboration as a threshold condition for PDS development (Levine, 1998).

## Lacunae

## What don't we know?

This section focuses on lacunae in our knowledge about PDS performance and questions for which we have limited answers. To a considerable degree, I think that these questions constitute a research agenda for those involved in PDS work and those who have the interests of the movement at heart. I also believe that if we don't find answers to some of these questions fairly soon, the movement runs the risk of becoming stalled and possibly derailed.

### 1. Does PDS work benefit children?

The most pressing question confronting PDS implementers and advocates is whether the professional development school produces improvements in the learning, learning-related

behavior, and well-being of children—the students in the PDS itself, as well as students in the larger education community. Do more effective preservice clinical experiences, greater opportunities for professional development among practicing teachers, and increased collaboration between schools and colleges—all of which we have some evidence that PDSs are providing—translate into positive change for students?

While the overall amount of convincing data is meager, we do have scattered reports of PDS accomplishments in the area of student learning (Barkdale-Ladd & Nedeff, 1997). For example, some encouraging descriptive data have emerged from a 1996 evaluative study of the PDS network in Texas, which includes more than 400 PDSs (Macy, Macy, & Kjelgaard, 1996). The report, which was commissioned by the Texas Education Agency, indicates that students in several of the network's PDSs showed significant growth on state K-12 basic skills assessments. A longitudinal assessment of five PDSs in the Benedum Collaborative in West Virginia also indicated impressive gains in student achievement (Webb-Dempsey, n.d.).

We can find in the PDS literature some reports of improved writing, math, and reading scores among elementary students in PDSs, reduced drop-out rates, and lower incidences of antisocial behavior, as well as other positive accomplishments [See Abdal-Haqq (1998a) for a discussion of PDS literature on student learning.] However, such reports are isolated, scattered, and insufficiently aggregated to provide the convincing evidence needed to buttress claims that PDSs, in general, provide significant benefits to students.

Nevertheless, when we look at what the literature tells us about student learning outcomes in PDS settings, we might consider Carl Sagan's comment: "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

I think Sagan's comment, which I believe referred to the question of whether extraterrestrial life exists, is applicable to PDS work. While mainstream PDS literature does not abound with

reports of work or results related to student learning, such reports are sometimes found in fugitive literature (e.g., unpublished reports, internal or limited-circulation documents, electronic and audio-visual material). I have found that reports of activity and positive accomplishments related to student learning are sometimes buried in work that has collaboration or teacher development as the primary focus. In addition, frequently when articles are published or papers presented about student learning activities that take place in PDS settings, no mention is made of the fact that the work took place there. Because I may be acquainted with the school or site mentioned in the article, I can link it to the PDS, but the PDS connection is not always transparent. Disseminating your work on student learning in PDS settings and referencing the PDS in the work you publish can help to build the knowledge base on PDSs and support the notion that they do contribute to advancing student learning.

**2. Do PDSs increase teacher retention and/or performance?**

The second unanswered critical question about PDSs relates to what happens to teacher candidates who complete their initial preparation in PDS settings. Is there less attrition among PDS graduates; do they seek employment and remain in inner-city, rural, or other schools where there are critical needs; do they carry with them the practices and dispositions acquired during their preservice studies? How do they fare in schools that do not mirror the conditions found in PDSs?

**3. What does it cost to operate a PDS?**

Critical question number three is related to cost and financing. What does it actually cost to implement the complete range of PDS activities, and how do these costs compare to more traditional approaches to the same functions? Although we find very little material in the PDS literature on the subject of costs and financing, the little we do have suggests that start-up costs may average $50,000 per year over a 2-year period, (Clark, 1997), and ongoing costs may

average 10% above the cost of traditional arrangements (Theobold, 1991, cited in Clark, 1997). Without careful and accurate documentation of costs, as well as thoughtful consideration of approaches to financing that do not rely on transitory funds, PDS implementers will be hampered in one of their major tasks—to demonstrate that the PDS performs better or more cost-effectively a function that each contributing partner values.

**4. Do PDSs promote and advance equity for all learners?**

A fourth critical question concerns equity—equity in policy and practice for all learners and stakeholders involved in the PDS enterprise. From the earliest days of the movement, commitment to equity has been prominent in the language of PDS theorists and practitioners. Indeed, addressing inequities in schooling has consistently been presented as an explicit purpose, goal, rationale, commitment, or guiding principle (Clark, 1995; Holmes Group, 1990; Levine, 1998).

However, despite avowed commitment to equitable schooling, the literature reveals little progress in achieving general equity goals or specific objectives. Valli, Cooper, and Frankes (1997) who investigated the research and advocacy literature on PDSs, found no separate research studies that focused primarily on equity issues and concluded that, overall, "broad issues of equity and social justice are often absent in both PDS research and practice" (p. 252). In a 1998 publication, *The Rise and Stall of Teacher Education Reform*, Fullan, Galluzzo, Morris, and Watson report results from a study of the Holmes Group's work and accomplishments related to teacher education reform. Utilizing multiple data sources, the authors examined the appropriateness of goals and principles for meeting the needs of teacher education, progress in achieving the Holmes agenda, and the impact of the group's work on teacher education in general. One focus of the study was progress in meeting equity goals for teacher development and P-12 schooling and the accomplishments of PDSs in this regard. The

authors conclude that "PDSes as prototypes of equity-based reform are not in evidence" (p. 41).

Many PDSs have been deliberately established in inner-city and rural communities with significant populations of children from low-income communities and from African, Asian/Pacific Island, Latino, and Native American communities. We also have PDS partnerships working with special learners who have learning, emotional, or physical impairments. Do the distinctive qualities of the PDS create effective settings for addressing the instructional needs of these children? Because the challenges, and in some cases the costs, of mounting a PDS program tend to be greater in resource-poor schools, how do we ensure that the benefits we claim for PDS programs are not restricted to more affluent schools?

PDS implementers link much of the improvement in their preservice programs to longer, more intense clinical, field-based work and to more rigorous entry and exit standards. Preparation programs that require candidates to devote more time to field work often prove burdensome for poor and working-class students who must combine study with work or who must begin earning as soon as possible. Because minority students are disproportionately represented within these categories of students, the format of PDS preservice programs can result in these students opting out or dropping out of such programs, which negatively impacts efforts to increase the dwindling supply of teachers of color at a time when the population of students of color is growing (Hirsch, 1998). By the same token, entry and exit requirements that rely heavily on standardized tests to determine readiness or proficiency often limit access for teacher candidates from certain racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups who historically have lower pass rates on such exams. We have very little information about what PDS partnerships are doing to address this issue.

**5. Do PDSs enable the participation of students, families, and communities in decision making about what children learn, how they are taught, and the purpose and goals of schooling?**

What are PDS settings doing to broaden and deepen the participation of neglected stakeholders—specifically, parents, community members, and students themselves? Can PDSs devise structures, processes, and practices that tap the knowledge, expertise, and insights of parents, community members, and students? Can PDSs model approaches to engagement that move the school and university beyond their traditional paternal role to the status of partners who engage students, families, and communities as equals in mutual problem solving? Fullan et al. (1998, p. 42) observe, "...it is increasingly clear that parent and community reform must be closely linked to teacher and school reform."

School change (Freiberg, 1998; McLaughlin, 1994), diversity (Nieto, 1994), and PDS literature (Galassi, et al., 1998; Kimball, Swap, LaRosa, & Howick, 1995; Webb-Dempsey, 1997) offers many examples of the benefits of seeking guidance from children and parents about enablers of and constraints on learning. Just as PDSs have done pioneering work in bringing the voices of teachers and other school-based practitioners into conversations about teacher education, they are poised to investigate and test methods for bringing other, traditionally neglected stakeholders into conversations about teacher education and school renewal.

## PDS Destination:
## Purpose, Responsibility, and Accountability in PDS Work

Articulating a meaningful destination for PDSs requires clear thinking about the purpose of the work. John Goodlad, in a recent article, wrote:

> There is currently relatively widespread agreement among improvement-minded groups of teacher educators that producing better teachers to ensure better schools requires a close collaboration of universities and school districts in developing partner or professional development schools. But for what? Partnerships are formed to bring together the total array of resources thought necessary to a shared purpose. The shared mission of the partnership for teacher education arises not out of teacher education but out of schooling. (Goodlad, 1998, p. 20)

Goodlad suggests that PDS partnership efforts should focus on the needs of schooling and by extension, the needs of children in schools. Our goal, our destination, should be improved learning outcomes for the children in the PDS and in the communities and districts the PDS serves.

Unfortunately, the impression given by PDS literature is that the focus of PDS work is primarily on teacher education and the processes and structures that enable that work. While the four-part mission of PDSs (i.e., student learning, preservice preparation, professional development, applied inquiry) is listed in belief statements and partnership agreements, PDS literature suggests that the teacher development portion of the mission is more developed than the student learning function.

Why do we have this lopsided pattern of development?

In part, this may be due to lack of awareness that improving student learning is a function of the PDS. Shen (1994) and Bullough, Kauchak, Crow, Hobbs, and Stokes (1997) are among the researchers who have studied educator perceptions of the PDS mission and found that many

of their informants see the function of the PDS in very limited terms, primarily as a venue for preservice teacher training along fairly conventional lines.

Also, some PDSers appear to be guided by the "trickle down" theory— an approach that takes for granted that altered methods of preparing teachers and changed relationships between schools and colleges will automatically produce higher performing students. Many would argue that the "trickle down" theory has shown itself to be bankrupt as a strategy for economic and political empowerment; yet among many educators, there appears to be a touching faith in its efficacy.

There also exists the incremental approach to the PDS mission. This approach says, in effect, "Let's take it one step at a time and get the teacher education piece in place first."

A final and, in my opinion, more significant explanation for the lopsided nature of the movement's development, is a conceptualization of the PDS as primarily a vehicle for teacher professionalization. More rigorous clinical experiences, greater participation in school and teacher education decision making, and assuming empowering leadership roles are all seen as promoters of teacher professionalization, and professionalizing teaching is seen as the surest way to improve children's learning. A number of authors and researchers have questioned the ability of teacher professionalization, skill enhancement, and empowerment to produce substantive improvement in student learning, particularly for vulnerable or maginalized students (Fullan et al., 1998; Lipman, 1997; Murrell, 1998; Murrell & Borunda, 1997, Myers, 1996).

To a considerable degree, the movement has tacitly, and at times explicitly, taken medical education and, in particular, the teaching hospital as its model for enhancing the status of teachers and thereby improving the quality of teaching (Levine, 1998; Teitel, 1998b). Doctors consider themselves, and are considered by others, to be professionals; most are skilled; and

there is no doubt they have power. However, it requires very little reflection to see that, while teaching hospitals may produced technically skilled health professionals, neither the hospitals, the professionals they train, nor the industry is a monument to caring, democratic, enabling, or empowering relations with patients (Murrell, 1998). Health care professionals and institutions are accountable to licensing boards, regulatory bodies, stockholders, and other professionals, but it has never struck me that they consider themselves especially accountable to patients or the communities from which their patients come.

As long as PDSs see themselves primarily as institutions for turning out teachers, however skilled, there will be a tendency to feel accountable only to the producing partner and the hiring partner and possibly to some guardian of professional standards. Responsibility and accountability to children will remain secondary matters, and PDS implementers will see no need to seek the judgment of parents, students, and communities about the work that they do or to bring these neglected stakeholders into conversations about what work needs to be done or how to do it.

Ellen Pechman's (1992) essay on student learning in professional practice schools (a variant of the PDS model) is called *The Child as Meaning Maker: The Organizing Principle for Professional Practice Schools*. Her thesis is present in the title. In this essay, she outlines the manner in which what is known about productive learning environments for children can be used to guide school restructuring, inquiry, and teacher education renewal in professional practice schools. The evidence to date suggests that, over all, PDSs have neglected to place children at the center of partnership activity; they have not made children the organizing principle for the work.

A persistent concern for PDSs is the absence of substantial impact or outcome evaluation and documentation. The research we do have focuses mainly on outcomes for preservice and inservice teachers. Very little can be found in the literature about student outcomes (Abdal-

Haqq, 1998a; Abdal-Haqq, 1998b; Teitel, 1998b; Valli, et al., 1997). PDS implementers have justifiable concerns about relying on conventional measures to assess student achievement, but there is scant evidence of efforts to develop alternative measures that inspire confidence. The practical consequences of continued neglect in this area are obvious. If we re-focus PDS work on children and derive responsibility from that focus, then the moral and ethical implications of this neglect also become obvious. Kimball, et al. (1995, p. 24) observe, "The success of a partnership...should be gauged by the extent to which examination and assessment reveal that student learning has improved."

When we consider or re-consider the destination of PDS work, we should keep before us the whole mission. PDSs, particularly those located in communities with large populations of children in need, have exceptional opportunities as well as awesome challenges. If our efforts and our accomplishments are limited to teacher education, then we neglect the possibilities. We run the risk of succumbing to what Lee Teitel calls, the "plateau effect" (forthcoming, cited in Teitel, 1998b) where one becomes content with achieving only a part of the mission.

In conclusion, we should take the time to become clear about destination before we commit human and fiscal resources to this work. Defining the destination of professional development schools, in my view, should involve a broad base of stakeholders—not just school and university professionals, but also families, community stakeholders, and students themselves—as equal partners in change. The needs of children should guide the work and be the touchstone for all labor. There is both a practical necessity and a moral obligation to document and evaluate the impact of PDS work on student learning and well being. Success should be gauged by the extent to which the work that is done improves student learning and well being. And finally, PDSs should take more seriously their responsibility to disseminate positive work related to student learning to the broader education community.

I return to the earlier questions of purpose, responsibility, and accountability in PDS work. Ultimately, the destination of PDSs is linked to the purpose of schools. Goodlad and others remind us that schools have a higher purpose than cranking out workers. Schools play a key role in socializing the young. Therefore, in this country, schools have a moral purpose consistent with democratic ideals. Our responsibility derives from that purpose. We should ask ourselves what kind of young adult do we want to see after 12 years of schooling, which in turn leads to more powerful questions: What kind of society do we want to live in? What kind of leaders and professionals do we want in charge? Potentially, PDSs can help America's schools educate citizens who are not only skilled, but also caring, honest, just, and fair. In the final analysis, we are accountable to future generations.

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