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Special Treatment or Responsive Instruction? Teaching Teachers in Master's-Level Coursework

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In 2004, an upper Midwestern school district received a grant to administer content-specific professional development to teachers of American history. A series of nine master's level, degree-eligible courses were developed and administered by the local university's history department. At the conclusion of the grant activities in spring of 2008, the teacher-participants were invited to be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to determine teacher motivation for taking the course and each teacher's overall impression of the effectiveness of the professors and course content. Additional data were gathered including demographic data such as years of experience and level of education for each of the history teachers and interviews with the history professors. One unique theme that emerged from the data was the expectation of specialized treatment.

Keywords

Professional development, Teacher learning, In-service teachers, History teachers

Special Treatment or Responsive Instruction? Teaching Teachers in Master's-Level Coursework

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Abstract

In 2004, an upper Midwestern school district received a grant to administer content-specific professional development to teachers of American history. A series of nine master's level, degree-eligible courses were developed and administered by the local university's history department. At the conclusion of the grant activities in spring of 2008, the teacher-participants were invited to be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to determine teacher motivation for taking the courses and each teacher's overall impression of the effectiveness of the professors and course content. Additional data were gathered including demographic data such as years of experience and level of education for each of the history teachers and interviews with the history professors. One unique theme that emerged from the data was the expectation of specialized treatment.

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Introduction

"Teachers are a different type of graduate student. They are working professionals. Teachers are not typical graduate students." (Darrin, a teacher and graduate student)

The notion of teachers as life-long learners is not a new one, yet the community of higher education is still grappling with how to design professional development that is perceived as meaningful by the learners and results in transformation of the profession. Research has found that despite extensive efforts, little has changed in teacher classrooms as a result of professional development (Walker, 2007).

The intense focus on accountability in education has prompted the need for highly effective teachers who can raise student achievement (National Staff Development Council, 2009). Many experts (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Progressive Policy Institute, 2005; Supovitz & Zief, 2000; Walker, 2007) call for increased content knowledge as a means for reaching this goal. Whether deserved or not, the current teaching force is being viewed as not being adequately prepared to be effective in the classroom (Jenson, Lewis, & Savage, 2002).

Between the spring semesters of 2004 and 2008, nine degree-eligible graduate courses were designed and offered to social studies teachers from a school district located in the upper Midwestern area of the United States. The project was funded through a grant from the federal Department of Education with the overall goal of raising teacher content knowledge of American history. The courses were developed and delivered in a traditional, face-to-face format by six history professors from a local university.

The nine courses and other professional development experiences were offered menu-style, and the teachers were able to choose them in any number and combination. In addition to the entrée-like graduate courses, the teachers could also choose from several side-dish experiences which included conferences (one national and three local) and two workshops with national trainers (Kevin Williams' "Bringing History Alive" and Jay McTighe's "Understanding by Design"). Because of the grant funding, the courses and other professional development experiences were offered entirely free of charge to the teachers.

The course topics were determined with input from district administration, including the district's history specialist and the professional development coordinator. The university professors took these suggestions, narrowed the topic list and designed the courses. The first three courses offered were designed in a 90-10 format, which included a 90% focus on history content and a 10% focus on pedagogy (lesson design, assessment, and content area reading strategies). In response to feedback from the teacher-participants, later courses were developed solely by the history professors with a total focus on history content.

In order to address some of the preconceived ideas about graduate courses, the project planners scheduled the courses to be rotated between the two high schools in the district. Many teachers associated graduate coursework with intense time-commitments, and some held negative ideas of academia (see Figure 1, a hand drawn cartoon one of the researchers saw hanging in the desk cubicle a teacher-participant). The planners wanted the classes to feel like they belonged to the teachers; therefore, only district teachers were allowed to enroll. In addition to being held in local high schools, the courses were scheduled based upon survey responses from the teachers, which identified the most convenient times for them.

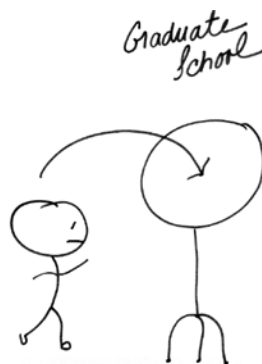


Figure 1. Jumping the graduate school hoop.

The planners also operated with the idea of "critical mass" (National Staff Development Council, 2009) in mind. Recognizing that leadership and involving the right people in the

district was important to success of the project, a well-respected teacher among the social studies staff was recruited to help manage the project and act as a liaison among the district administration, the university professors and the middle and high school teachers.

Review of Literature

Planning for Teacher-Learners

Planning advanced coursework for adults is challenging; the additional complication of preparing for adult learners who are practicing teachers increases this challenge. Well-designed courses for adult learners place a high priority upon meeting the needs of the adult learner (Boshier, 1991). Guskey and Sparks (1996) suggest beginning with a question which is focused not on the teacher-learners, but rather on their students: "What improvements in student learning do we seek and what changes must be made to get those results? (p. 1)." Then the instructional planners need to consider what type of experiences will be most likely to achieve those results, how they will know if the results have been achieved, and if the teacher learning experiences contributed to the results.

Boshier's (1991) seven motivational factors of adult learners provide a framework for both planning and evaluating adult learning experiences. The factors include Communication Improvement (especially in regard to non-native speakers), Social Contact (meeting people, making friends), Educational Preparation (remediate deficiencies or prepare for future educational experiences), Professional Advancement (within current career or another position), Family Togetherness (bridge generational gaps, improve family relationships), Social Stimulation (escaping unhappiness or boredom), and Cognitive Interest (learning for the sake of learning). Harvey, Sinclair and Dowson (2005) refer to a simpler, two factor learner motivation classification system of personal and professional.

Bringing About Change

Advanced coursework for teachers generally has the overarching goal of bringing about change in current practice. In order to bring about this change, held beliefs need to be challenged (Harvey et al., 2005). A paradigm shift (Hinson, Laprairie, & Cundiff, 2005) may be needed in order for the teacher-learners to precipitate the changes needed in their classrooms that support student achievement gains. Paradigm shifts and altered beliefs do not happen in quickie, one-shot experiences (Kilgore, 2005; Sawchuk, 2009). These experiences occur over time in a coherent manner, drawing on teachers' background knowledge and skills (Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Hinson, Laprairie, & Cundiff, 2005; National Staff Development Council, 2009; Walker, 2007) and grounding teacher learning in examples of practice (Huebner, 2009). In fact, the more contact hours a teacher spends participating in learning experiences, the more learning that occurs (National Staff Development Council, 2009).

For a variety of reasons related both to the learner (readiness, motivation) and the learning situation (presentation effectiveness, usefulness), learners have been found to respond along a continuum (Coburn, 2004). Coburn identified a five-tier continuum of response while studying teacher-learners through a series of professional development experiences: (a) Rejection, (b) Symbolic, (c) Parallel Structures, (d) Assimilation and (e) Accommodation. If the new information does not fit learners' beliefs, they will likely "Reject" the learning. A "Symbolic" response occurs when the learners superficially adopt the new learning. For example, the learner may hang an artifact on the wall or display a particular book on his desk, but the content is not integrated into practice. The next level of response

is termed "Parallel Structures." This response involves adding the new learning into practice without changing old practices, even if the two contradict one another. Next, a learner may reach the level of "Assimilation," in which new practices are integrated at the procedure and routine level, but not yet at the epistemological level. Finally, a learner may respond at the belief level through "Accommodation." This learner has reached transformation through a shift in fundamental belief systems.

Course instructors are also instrumental in facilitating change in the teacher-learners' belief systems and practices (Tom, 1999). The learners, whether consciously or subconsciously, watch the instructors, taking in the methods and materials used during the courses. Most college instructors rely on a didactic approach to instruction, which does not invite active learning from the participants (Tom, 1999). Active learning is the model most desired in K-12 (kindergarten through high school) classrooms today. Lacking modeling of this practice during the advanced coursework, the teacher-learners are less likely to replicate this practice in their own classrooms.

Barriers exist which prevent change from occurring. One such barrier, teacher behavior, was the feature of an article published in a magazine that is written for teachers (Norton, 2009). The author documents bad teacher behavior such as chatting and being disruptive during professional development experiences; behavior which occurs despite the quality of the learning experience. Another area which can be a barrier or a booster is perceived need or relevance of the learning experience (Supovitz & Zief, 2000). The learners need to see a reason for the change in order to vest themselves in the demanding change process (Richardson, 2005). Supovitz and Zief (2000) identify a myriad of barriers identified by teachers including family commitments, teachers' unwillingness to open up their practices to peers, school culture, district leadership, and past experiences with poor professional development. Finally, many teachers find themselves being pulled in multiple directions and spread too thin to do any of it well (Supovitz & Zief, 2000; Walker, 2007).

While some experts call for learning experiences that occur in the context of real life in their own classrooms (Johnson, 2006), Putnam and Borko (2000) offer an alternate perspective, explaining that some learners need to "break set," or get away from, their usual classroom context in order to perceive innovative ideas and experience new ways.

Research Focus

This research study set out to determine what teachers perceived they got out of the professional development opportunities, focusing in particular on the graduate courses sponsored through this project. Closely related sub-questions included what motivated the teachers to participate and if they changed their practice as a result of the professional development.

Semi-structured (Gay & Airasian, 2003) face-to-face interviews were used to answer the following research questions: (a) What motivated the teachers to participate in this professional development? (b) What were their expectations? (c) What benefits do teacher-learners perceive from the graduate coursework? (d) What impacts do the teacher-participants report that the courses had on their classroom practice? The interviews were all conducted by the same researcher for consistency. The researcher met the teachers at their schools before school, after school, or during their preparation period. The interviews were held in the teachers' classrooms.

To provide information on additional variables such as years of experience and current educational level, the teachers completed what was termed a “professional log” each semester of the grant project. Finally, course enrollment and overall participant performance was tracked through the university instructors.

Participants

An invitation to participate in the advanced coursework was extended to all the middle level and high school social studies teachers in the school district. In the spring of 2004, there were 40 social studies teachers in the district’s middle and high schools. Additionally, there were three teachers who were teaching elementary and considering moving to the middle level, who asked to be included. Out of the 43 potential teacher-participants, 38 teachers chose to participate in at least one graduate course. While more teachers participated in the local conferences and workshops, only teachers who completed at least one graduate course were considered a participant in this research study. (See Figure 2 for course enrollment numbers.)

Figure 2. Degree-Eligible master’s level courses offered to treatment group

Term	Course Title	Number of Participants
Spring 2005	Course 1: Women in America	20
Summer 2005	Course 2: American Frontier and West	11
Summer 2005	Course 3: America’s Changing Identity Through Documents	8
Fall 2005	Course 4: Key Episodes in American Political and Social History	16
Spring 2006	Course 5: America in the Western Hemisphere: Turning Points in History	22
Spring 2007	Course 6: Modern US History	18
Summer 2007	Course 7: Civil Rights in the American South 1607 to Present	6
Fall 2007	Course 8: Lecture Series I	11
Spring 2008	Course 9: Lecture Series II	12

Data Collection

There were 28 teacher-participants who were still teaching in district at the middle or high school levels at the end of the project. All were invited to complete an interview, and all but one accepted. The instructors of the history courses were also invited to complete an interview. Four of the six instructors completed interviews. One of the instructors had since retired and was not able to be reached, and another had taken a position at a different university and declined the interview.

To answer the research questions, a semi-structured (Gay & Airasian, 2003) face-to-face interview protocol was developed which included a series of open-ended questions and prompts. The protocol was intended to give the teachers an opportunity to talk about their experiences. While the same base of questions was used with each of the participants, the

responses given by the participants often took the interviews into differing areas. This drifting was allowed by the interviewer as it permitted insight into what the participants felt was important and memorable about their experiences with this professional development. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. See Figure 3 for the interview prompts.

Figure 3. Teacher-participant interview protocol

1. Why did you take the course(s)?
2. Do you feel that the courses you took through the grant were beneficial? If so, please tell me how. If not, please explain.
3. Have you changed any classroom practices or materials as a result of the courses? Please explain.
4. (If yes to question three) how did the students respond to the changes you made? Would you say this is a different response than you typically see? Please explain.
5. Do you have plans to make other changes in your classroom based on what you learned in the courses? (follow up to get information about both pedagogy and content)
6. Please describe your teaching style.
7. What materials do you use for teaching? Were they supplied through this project?
8. What methods did the course instructors use?
9. Were these methods effective?
10. Can you please suggest ways the courses could have been more beneficial?

Data Analysis

Using NVivo 8 qualitative software and Microsoft Word, each of the authors independently coded approximately half of the interviews, at which point a consistency check was completed to determine inter-coder reliability. The initial coding was found to be highly consistent. The coding followed the open coding method described by Straus and Corbin (1990). The first layer of coding revealed patterns and themes which were explored further through subsequent codings to uncover nuances in the data. Each of these major themes and the sub-themes are presented in the Results section that follows.

Twenty-seven teacher interviews coupled with four university instructor interviews allowed for multiple data sources not only through the job positions the interviewees held, but also because the social studies teachers represented a wide range of demographics. The teachers ranged from those with less than five years of experience to teachers with 35 years of experience. They also taught different subjects within the social studies discipline in different schools to different grade levels. Additionally, through the high number of interviews, saturation of codes was reached for this project.

Results

Several themes and patterns emerged from the interview data. Some were expected, such as comments related to the perceived benefit of the courses and course impact on the teachers' classrooms, but some were unexpected and pervasive, such as the theme of tailoring. The themes of learner motivation, benefits, expectations, and impact are described below.

Learner Motivation

Teacher participation is important to any professional development program. As reported above, a high percentage of the eligible teachers in the targeted school district agreed to participate in the advanced coursework associated with this project. In addition, a high percentage of teachers continued to participate over the project's four-year span. We sought to determine why the teachers took the courses, so that other professional development programs can use this data to encourage teachers to participate and help teachers to stay engaged.

Because the teachers were at various stages in their careers ranging from first year teachers to teachers eligible for retirement, it was hypothesized that they would have differing reasons for participating in the advanced coursework, but patterns were not seen based upon years of experience or education level. However, patterns were noted in whether the motivations were personal or professional (Harvey et al., 2005). After identifying themes of personal and professional motivation in the data, we used Boshier's (1991) motivational factors to further delineate the nature of the personal or professional motivations. Four of Boshier's seven factors were identified by the learners in this study: (a) Educational Preparation, (b) Professional Advancement, (c) Cognitive Interest, and (d) Social Contact. We added a category that became too prevalent to ignore: For Free. The teachers were motivated by the opportunity to take the courses at no personal monetary cost.

Thirteen teachers stated that they took the courses because they wanted to learn more about history in order to help them with their own classroom teaching. Hence, they were seeking additional Educational Preparation (Boshier, 1991). Some of the reasons were related to their own perceived teaching deficiencies. "Because I don't have a history major myself, to get the history background myself, was really nice." Other teachers wanted to learn about teaching history (both methods and content were cited). "It had been a long time since I had taken a history course, so this was an opportunity to sort of get renewed and find out new approaches to history."

Seventeen of the teachers chose to participate in the advanced coursework for Professional Advancement (Boshier, 1991). Moving up the pay scale and/or obtaining credits toward a master's degree free of cost was very appealing to the teachers. Five teachers cite a goal of working toward a master's degree as a reason they took the courses.

All the classes I've taken are through [local university]. I haven't taken any anywhere else or anything like that, and that's where I would do my master's. That just makes sense to me, um and, so I do kind of need to get going on that.

The remainder of the teachers talked about lane changes on the salary scale and teaching license renewal as their main motivators. "First of all, the credits are great to be used to move along with the salary schedule." Another teacher shared, "I needed five credits to teach another year beyond next year."

Pure interest in learning for the sake of learning, Cognitive Interest (Boshier, 1991), was referenced by 17 of the teachers. These teachers claimed they love history and enjoy learning more about the subject. "I'm at the top of the salary scale now. I don't need any more credits, but I would still keep taking them [the courses] because I enjoyed them a great deal." While the teachers in this study are all social studies teachers, not all of them teach American history; therefore, the courses were not immediately relevant to them. This

factor is what separated the category of Cognitive Interest from the category of Educational Preparation. "The content was appealing, Contemporary US History. I don't teach that, but I wanted a broader scope of history and a connection to current events."

The first three factors were the most prevalent, but 6 teachers did mention that they liked interacting with other teachers. This motivational factor falls under Boshier's (1991) category of Social Contact. One teacher stated, "Meeting people was also really nice." Another shared, "I enjoy the interaction with classmates." One teacher was enamored with the instructors and national-level speakers, describing them in the following way.

I love the speakers. It's a unique environment. I get to see people from the region, the nation. I mean, I can remember Dr. Rabb. He had just flown in from the airport. I think we were out at the Holiday Inn or the Ramada. It was a nice little private get-together, and you don't get a chance to sit down with, good Lord, that's one of the highest powered historians!

Because of the special nature of this grant project an additional motivational factor emerged, which we term "For Free." Ten teachers used the word "free" when asked why they participated in the advanced coursework. As stated above, all the costs associated with the advanced coursework was offered free of charge to the participants, including tuition, fees, and materials. The teachers were also provided a stipend for their course seat-time. For some, money was the primary motivator, "I took them primarily because they were free." For others, it was a secondary motivator, "First of all, the credits are great to be used to move along with the salary schedule. Um, also, they were cheap, being free, and that's an opportunity that's really, really hard to pass up."

Learner Expectations

Both the instructors of the professional development courses and the teacher-learners who took the courses spoke of their expectations regarding the course. The teachers and their instructors viewed the teachers as having a unique status, different than other students who may take a graduate course; they were teachers, and because of that, required special treatment. Several ideas related to this theme were repeated through the interview transcripts: (a) teachers do not have time to complete the work typical for a graduate course, (b) the work required of the teacher-learners needs to be what they need and want (the idea of what this should look like was not the same across the group), and (c) the instructional methods need to be tailored for teachers.

Workload was one area that teachers found different than what they expected or different than other graduate courses they had taken.

I was more surprised that the workload and what was required of me in this course was really similar to what a lot of my undergrad classes were like, um, not so much the beginner level, but a lot of like the 400 level classes that I took.

Another teacher commented in a similar fashion. "The workload would have been a little lighter that way [compared to other graduate courses]."

Many of the teachers felt the lighter workload was warranted.

I thought it was fair considering the situation we were in, full time jobs. Um, if it had been much more, I don't think I would have been able to stay with the program, but it was a reasonable expectation given the situation.

Teachers also felt the scheduling of course meeting times should be tailored to their needs. Several teachers described the instructors as flexible and understanding.

I think for the most part they [university instructors] were flexible in knowing that we were all busy teachers, and you know, some of us are parents and coaches, and whatever. So, I think they, most of them really, did a pretty good job of balancing that—being firm with expectations, but well, what do think as a group, what's gonna work for us, or what kind of schedule...

Even with this extraordinary flexibility provided by the instructors, the teachers thought they should receive full master's credit. The teachers were not alone in this thinking. The university instructors also spoke of the catering they did to meet the teachers' needs and wants. They lightened the reading load, lowered expectations, catered the topics to fit teachers' interests, and altered their own schedules to accommodate those of the teachers. One instructor spoke to the workload, "Well, I think the expectations are lower. These are courses that are targeted for these people, and it met their needs. There would have been much more reading and paper-writing for a graduate course on campus." All of the instructors had similar sentiments; although, all of them seemed to accept the arrangement.

It's different for one thing in that, uh, we read less material, um, which again was, I sort of forgot about it now, but that was kind of a debate or struggle we had at the time, if that's the right word. Because when you teach graduate students here [at the university] in the history department, you are assuming that they are going to work on a master's degree or a Ph.D.; and therefore, they need broad exposure to 8 or 10 books in a semester. This was not a situation like that. These were teachers. They don't intend to do a Ph.D. Maybe they'll do a masters degree, but I guess I found out pretty quickly that they weren't interested in reading 6 or 8 or 10 books in the space of 3 or 4 weeks. It was not what they wanted. It was not where they were at. So it was an adjustment on my part to that reality, and...in hind sight I don't have any problem with it.

Learner Benefits

The teachers, who attended the advanced courses, identified multiple benefits emerging from their experiences. Most of the teacher responses focused on professional benefits. The teachers spoke of benefits even when not prompted or when responding to another prompt. Coding of the interviews produced nearly 250 references, and 34 pages of coded text related to benefits. The benefits were grouped into categories which include: expanded knowledge and new ideas, collaboration, and tangibles.

Knowledge and ideas were the most frequently noted benefits among the teachers. They spoke of the courses as "refreshers" and "opportunities to see what was available in an area." One teacher explained how he experienced these courses differently than the ones that were part of his undergraduate degree.

It [the class] was so much different than college because I saw it through a different lens. Like, "How would I teach this?" And so, that was really good to be able to learn

as having been a teacher now, instead of just learning for learning. Um, so I think that was the biggest benefit for me was just to get some new ideas flowing on how to teach different historical concepts.

The notion of relevance was mentioned by nearly all of the teachers. They appreciated being able to bring the content back to their own students.

I liked the later classes in which there were some demonstrations of perhaps teaching methodology. For example, I enjoyed the music, TV and movies of the 50s, and the fact that we kind of went online and we looked at things. You know, it just gives you a good model for something that you can do in your classroom. I think we always look for that. You know, what is something I can use right now, tomorrow, in my class.

At the same time, some teachers also spoke about the inability to use the content presented through the coursework.

There were a number of classes that were offered that dealt with the Revolutionary War, the early philosophers in American political history that we don't cover in [this district]. It's not a part of the US History curriculum. They do in junior high, but I don't think they needed to have gone in-depth that much for junior high students or junior high teachers. Was it an interesting class? Definitely, I found it fascinating, but was it really applicable to my class? Probably not.

Collaboration with colleagues seemed to come as a surprise to several of the teachers. It seemed as though they did not realize what they had previously been missing out on.

I could have told you maybe four or five social studies teachers in the district when we started, and now I know all, I know all their names and I've become friends with quite a few of them. So it's been good. I email them, some of them weekly, asking "What are you doing in your class?" You know, "What do you have for resources and materials?" It's become a much more open department, district-wide.

Another teacher talked about collaboration in terms of learning from his peers. "When you're talking about Vietnam and [colleague] is sitting there talking about his experiences being drafted. O.k., I wasn't there, that's very interesting for me."

Tangibles such as resources materials, course texts, and laptop computers were among the items mentioned as being beneficial by the teachers. They wanted classroom-ready resources to take back to their students. One teacher explained, "One thing I did like from [university instructor], he shared with us, like um, some of those websites. So when we talked about Jazz and music, that was good, having resources, websites. I liked that."

One teacher described her frustration with the courses not producing resources which were useable with her students.

I know they teach college-aged students, but for me to have resource books, like even picture books or um, things I could share with my kids, that's more grade level appropriate, you know, and I know that probably isn't part of their curriculum, but um, that's always a nice thing to have.

The multitude of benefits mentioned by the teachers coupled with the frustration by the teachers prompted our investigation of the impact the graduate courses were having in the teachers' classrooms.

Learner Impact

Effective learning experiences should provide the learners with new knowledge or skills or both. Our initial coding had revealed several related categories including benefits, relevance, barriers, and change. Using Coburn's (2004) continuum, we were able to further categorize learning outcomes reported by the teachers by nesting our own codes within the continuum. Using this continuum retrospectively also allowed us to validate our findings. The learning reported by the teachers who attended the advanced coursework through this project is categorized in three sections of the continuum: Rejection, Parallel Structures and Assimilation. Learning at the level of Accommodation, the highest level of learning, was not reported by the teachers. Symbolic was not seen during this analysis, but we suspect it is because of the interview methodology. This is an area that we hope to explore further through additional research.

Rejection occurs when new information is not accepted by learners because it clashes with their beliefs (Coburn, 2004). We found rejection did not happen at the project or course level. Rather, it occurred toward particular ideas or content within the classes. The content which garnered the highest amount of rejection was the content related to pedagogical methodology. Several teachers spoke with rancor about the lesson planning and associated methodology that was integrated into the first two courses. One stated simply, "Most of the lesson plans I probably won't [use]." Another teacher said, "I guess I don't feel like I need someone to teach me how to teach." One teacher stated that she had not changed her teaching at that point, but may do so in the future.

Right now it's [my teaching] not the way I want it to be actually. I want it to be more hands-on. I want it to be more interactive. It's, at this point, it's more um, lecture-based and textbook-based, and I'm hoping over the next couple of years to get further and further away from that.

Parallel Structures, using new practices alongside the old (Coburn, 2004), is the type of learning most commonly described by the teachers in this study. The use of primary sources was pushed during the advanced coursework, and most of the teachers talked about using primary sources in their classes because of this emphasis. One teacher explained the gradual transition she is making, "For the Dust Bowl Era, I brought in more authentic stuff."

The idea of Parallel Structures involves using ideas and activities without much additional thought or adaptation. Rather, the learner borrows from others.

[University instructor] was talking about different ways of interpreting and viewing the Civil War, and some people saying that it was a good thing, and other people saying that it was inevitable, and other people saying that no, maybe it could have been avoided if these things had taken place. And when I presented the causes of the Civil War in class, I kind of threw that out to them [the students].

This teacher used the university instructor's ideas in the same context and without variance.

Primary sources seemed to be a way that teachers demonstrated Assimilation (Coburn, 2004) level learning, making changes in their routines and daily practices. One teacher reported starting a practice of "Primary Source Wednesday." Another explained the transfer he made to other learning experiences. "I learned how to implement primary sources into my classes. I don't think you need to use primary sources only in history. I've been using them in World Culture, and I've used them in Econ." These teachers were able to take ideas and make them their own, adapting and transferring them to new situations.

While the goal of professional development is to affect change, when asked the changes they made, the teachers reported mainly superficial additions to their practice. None of the teachers described a shift in their teaching philosophy or significant changes in their practice. Accommodation level learning (Coborn, 2004) was not reported.

Conclusions and Discussion

Learner Motivation and Expectations

Contrary to the recommendations of many experts about the way teacher professional development should be planned (Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Huebner, 2009; Johnson, 2006; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Tom, 1999), the teachers in this study largely preferred learning experiences that involved content learning without direct classroom application. As the project progressed, several teachers requested that lesson planning not be required as a class assignment and the focus be entirely on content. At first, we suspected this was an easy way out for them. Writing papers or being present for a lecture or class discussion necessitated less time and thought investment. However, upon deeper reflection, we wondered if their rejection was related to the way the learning experiences were presented. The teachers did not seem to appreciate the implied assumption that they were not doing the right things in their classrooms. They wanted their experience and training respected and valued.

While many of the teachers were looking for free or convenient credits for license renewal or salary upgrades, some teachers were interested in the courses offering practical benefits. They hoped for materials and ideas that were classroom-ready for their middle or high school students. The teachers did not feel they had the time and, for some, the expertise to convert materials from a college-level to a middle or high school level.

Another issue arose in the manner with which the courses were presented. Many teachers acknowledged that they used a traditional approach that perhaps needed updating, but the new ideas were offered in a way that may have lacked respect for what they already knew. For example, 22 of the teacher participants began their careers before content standards were introduced in the state, making the standards-based Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006) approach a large change to accept all at once.

The teachers did not seem to feel as though they owned these learning experiences (Huffman, Thomas, & Lawrenz, 2003). About midway through the project, the planners recognized this lack of ownership. In response to the teachers' comments, the teachers were surveyed, and the final two graduate courses were developed as a lecture series with the topics chosen by the teachers. To further customize the courses, eight lectures were delivered in each series, from which teachers chose six to attend if they wanted to earn academic credit. Several teachers, who did not care about the credit, attended less sessions based upon interest or need.

Learner Benefits

The aspects teachers identified as being benefits allow insight into what it is that teachers want from professional development. Relevance is often touted in adult education literature, and we did find relevance, or the lack thereof, to be important to the teachers in this study. What struck us most is that while the teachers did expect benefits from the courses such as advancement on the salary schedule or credits for license renewal, they did not necessarily expect the courses to be relevant to their teaching. As we pondered what it was that teachers wanted, we remembered the little stick man jumping through the hoop and realized that many teachers see professional development as the hoop they need to clear in order to get about the real business of teaching that happens in their classrooms. Participating in professional development allows teachers to keep teaching, but it is not always beneficial at the practical level. In fact, when asked whether or not the courses were beneficial, nearly all of the teachers spoke of professional benefits for themselves. A follow-up prompt was used to focus their thinking on their students.

Learner Impact

Why did learning occur at more often at the lower end of Coburn's (2004) continuum for the teacher-learners in this project? Guskey and Sparks (1996) offer some insights into this common phenomenon. These authors call for teacher learning experiences that are deeply integrated into the teachers' daily classroom lives. The graduate-level history classes did not meet this criterion. They were abstract for many of the teachers, lacking the topics or materials that could be directly applied to their classrooms. The content was esoteric to some, who do not have sufficient background or interest in history to enable them to process the information. Ultimately, however, the extent to which any teacher changes as a result of advanced training is up to that teacher (Kent, 2004). They seemed not to have the time or the desire to extend beyond the commitments they were already making to their teaching.

As was found by Supovitz and Zief (2000), teachers were asking for smaller amounts of time spent outside of the school day. The courses designed as lecture series seemed to fit this need. Short readings or artifacts were sent out electronically before the sessions so teachers could prepare for the lecture. Then teachers attended the two-to-three hour lecture, which included time for questions and comments. The preparation time was minimal, and the sessions were held in the evening during the school year, which is what most teachers in this study stated they preferred. At the same time, while courses offered on week nights during the school year, may be convenient, they may not be the most conducive for learning (Tom, 1999). After a full day of teaching, and maybe even after school coaching or tutoring, teachers are mentally and physically exhausted. Sitting through a nearly three-hour graduate course is challenging and possibly counter-productive.

Thinking of teachers as learners should be natural, yet the university instructors who designed and delivered the courses did not report that it felt natural. In fact, they reported feeling uncomfortable and uncertain. One instructor shared, "It was hard to sort of get my mind wrapped around it. What is this exactly, and what are we doing, and who's the audience?" Audience should be a guiding factor in planning any type of learning experience. Instructors need to be aware of whom their audience is, or they risk using language and content the audience is not ready for (Jenson et al., 2002).

The university instructors were out of their element both physically and mentally. While, the drive through town to the school district high schools where the classes were held was short, the distance between teachers and the typical graduate student was much farther

apart. The instructors did report gaining comfort as time went on, but the teachers presented unexpected challenges in their role as students.

Teaching teachers at the university requires a change in thinking for higher education faculty. The professors in this study did not have prior experience as K-12 classroom teachers. Their classes at the university were made up of traditional graduate students; traditional graduate students expect a heavy reading and writing workload from a graduate level course. For the most part, teachers do not present this same type of learner profile. The professors all expressed frustration with the situation. One professor stated, "Who were these people? What were their motives? What kinds of strategies should you use to teach them? I always feel like I'm sort of playing this guessing game." Another professor expressed similar sentiments, "I don't really think that any of us has really known for sure, because we've never done it [taught teachers] before. We didn't really figure out how to package or offer courses consistently to appeal to the teachers." Understanding teachers as learners may help professors to develop graduate coursework that provides the maximum benefit for teacher learners. This study provided insight into who teachers are as graduate student teachers and what it is that they want from their professional development.

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