

Staff Development: Whose Job Is It?

ELIZABETH A. DILLON*

The institution of higher education, the local school district, the teacher organization—each has an important role in the staff development program. This writer describes a pioneering effort to bring these three components together in a supportive endeavor.

PEOPLE who work in staff development sometimes feel like the small child who watched intently as her mother applied face cream. In response to the inevitable "Why?", her mother replied, "It's to make me look prettier." The youngster contemplated the removal of the cream and remarked, "Well, it didn't do any good—but I like the smell!"

Like the face cream, staff development activities are currently being applied liberally throughout education, and although we can't be sure they make too much difference, we think they "smell good" enough—or have enough potential for positive change—that an increasing number of groups are anxious

to have a piece of the action. Three of these have a special interest, institutions of higher education, local school districts, and teacher organizations.

Institutions of Higher Education

Initially, colleges and universities, particularly teachers colleges, had no competition in the area of staff development. They were the only organizations which attempted to keep members of the active teaching staff abreast of new ideas. Teachers somewhat perfunctorily reported for night classes or summer school courses until such time as the next magic degree was in hand. Offerings for teachers were usually determined by the program of studies leading to the degree as outlined by university or college faculty members. School districts complacently accepted additional college hours completed as adequate evidence of professional growth.

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With the arrival of Sputnik, the local school district suddenly began to look critically at the quality of teacher preparation, both preservice and in-service, and at their own responsibility for in-service training. As a result, serious questions have been raised as to whether or not continued training of teachers can and should be done on the university campus in isolation from the local school program, and what the role of the local school district can and should be.

Local School District

Partially in response to this "consciousness raising," many school districts have established district-level staff development programs. The intent of such programs has been to provide a locally-developed, on-going program of professional growth geared to meet the particular goals and objectives of the local district.

Vaughn Phelps, Superintendent of the Westside Community Schools, District #66,

Omaha, Nebraska, and current national president-elect of AASA, whose district employs a full-time staff development director for a staff of approximately 500 and a student population of 9500, expresses his commitment to district-level staff development in this way:

If we're really going to improve the quality of education for students, it's going to be through improving the effectiveness of staff members who work with them. This means the superintendent and the board have to commit themselves through overt actions—budgetary considerations specifically for staff development, and human resources and time where necessary.

Dr. Phelps contends that while the college or university can provide a basic education, the district can best determine what specific components of continuing education are needed to assist it in meeting its objectives. He recommends that the district contract with the university when possible to provide these components, but suggests that when the resources are not available there, the local district can and should develop them locally.

District-level staff development programs, however, are not without their shortcomings. Sometimes they suffer from over-pragmatism. A consultant recently said, "Show teachers in an in-service activity how to make something for use in the classroom out of four pipe cleaners and they will go home satisfied, but try to give them anything related to learning theory and it's instant turn-off."

Too often district-level activities are not tied either to district or to individual goals or needs, and are not based on solid learning theory. Most programs are still organized primarily around a smorgasbord approach which does not zero in on specific areas where improvement is needed. In such programs there are few good attempts at evaluation to determine whether or not any of the activity made any difference in the classroom. Very seldom are teachers adequately involved in the goal-setting or the planning and monitoring of staff development programs.

Teacher Organization

With the coming of teacher militancy, negotiations, and collective bargaining has come a strong determination on the part of many teacher organizations to have control over, or at least substantial participation in, programs which affect the teaching staff—a prime example being staff development. As evidence of this, the theme of the second Annual Conference on Collective Negotiations in Education, held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in May 1974, was "Collective Negotiations and Teacher Staff Development."

While one speaker at the conference facetiously suggested that teacher negotiations customarily go through two militant cycles to one professional cycle—the professional one being a rest period—this activist group of teachers evinced a serious concern for appropriate involvement in their own self-improvement programs. The executive secretary of the Michigan Education Association expressed the general consensus of those present in these words: "To me, professional development is as important as economic benefits at the bargaining table."

If this group is at all representative, teachers are becoming more and more unwilling to accept staff development efforts which they have no part in planning and which are "clapped on" them. At the Ann Arbor conference, some teachers voiced an interest in planning cooperatively with local administrators and institutions of higher education. Others expressed a strong determination to plan and conduct their own staff development programs independently.

The emphasis for this particular group of teachers was very much on the needs and rights of the individual teacher as they applied to staff development. What seemed to be omitted was a focus on the responsibility of the teacher organization for helping to improve the instructional program of a total school or district through concerted, combined efforts of district and/or school staff. It appeared sufficient to many in this group merely to survey teachers to determine what they felt they needed in the way of staff development, provide an array of activities

based on that survey, and depend on the teacher's individual desire for self-improvement to provide the necessary impetus. Very little was said that would lead the listener to believe that the teacher organization feels much responsibility for, or intent to monitor, participation of its members in staff development activities.

Concerns for All

It is hard to argue that each of these three groups should not have a considerable stake in staff development. Each has a unique contribution to make, but just now there are obvious areas of present or potential conflict, and as a result, there is likeli-

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hood of less than effective use of resources, both human and financial.

Unless there can be improved communication and cooperation, much effort may be expended in some form of power struggle. Efforts may be duplicated or even directed toward conflicting objectives. Serious gaps may occur, and almost certainly there will be no unified, concerted effort toward the potentially significant improvement in the education of students toward which all three groups are sincerely directing their efforts.

Recommendations

As a possible answer to these concerns, the following is suggested as one approach. Each of the three organizations is in a position to identify a particular area of responsibility for which it is best qualified to render

a service related to staff development. Following are examples:

1. The *school district*, through its board and administrative structure (and with substantial input from the teacher organization), could analyze data available, identify areas where improvement is needed, determine direction, establish objectives, and develop implementation plans for meeting those objectives.

2. The *institution of higher education*, through a specialized consultative or advisory unit of the teachers college or university, could be responsive to district needs and requests by doing or reporting research pertinent to the goals and objectives established. This unit could also provide expertise in specialized areas such as needs assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, and prescription, and particularly in the design of application strategies determined by assessed need and based on sound learning research findings.

3. Representatives from the *teacher organization* could help district administrators to plan and organize the staff development program which would assist the district in meeting those objectives which have been cooperatively established. They could assist in the monitoring and encouraging of teacher

participation in the program and in regular critiquing to determine its value to individual members of the teaching staff as well as to the achievement of the goals.

There is great potential in marshaling the forces available in the institution of higher education, the local school district administration, and the teacher organization, to focus on worthwhile, results-oriented staff development efforts, but it will require a kind of parity which does not now exist, and it will require that members of the three organizations learn to operate in an atmosphere of greater openness and trust.

We in education can take the easy road of continuing to apply a patch here and poultice there, to convince ourselves that we are doing something significant for students because our staff members are engaged in a flurry of professional growth activities from a variety of sources, or we can accept the more difficult task of disciplining ourselves and our organizations to direct concentrated efforts toward areas of identified need. The choice we make may have significance far beyond what we are able to foresee at the present time. Certainly the problem is worth serious consideration by all those who are involved. □

Identify need	Design staff development plan	Implement and monitor progress of plan	Evaluate effectiveness of plan
1. <i>District</i> —collects and analyzes data, determines goals and objectives	1. <i>District</i> —assigns responsibility for development of plan based on goals and objectives, approves plan, provides funds	1. <i>District</i> —assigns responsibility for implementation of plan, periodically monitors overall progress of program toward achievement of district goals, and participation of individual staff members	1. <i>District</i> —assigns responsibility for evaluating achievement of program goals, overall participation of staff, recommends on basis of reported outcomes
2. <i>T.O.</i> —advisory, provides input, recommends	2. <i>T.O.</i> —provides input, assists in developing plan, sets up criteria for participation of members	2. <i>T.O.</i> —assists with implementation of plan, monitors participation and satisfaction of staff members, recommends changes	2. <i>T.O.</i> —evaluates program effectiveness as it relates to individual teacher participation, satisfaction, and performance, recommends changes on the basis of feedback
3. <i>IHE</i> —consults on request, provides instruments, supplies research information	3. <i>IHE</i> —consults on request, provides pertinent research data, conducts action research on request, assists in development of plan on request	3. <i>IHE</i> —consults on request, provides expertise in instruction or demonstration if requested, or assists in development of such expertise	3. <i>IHE</i> —provides instruments, action research, consultative assistance, assists in making recommendations based on data collected

T.O.—Teacher Organization
IHE—Institution of Higher Education

Design for a Cooperative Staff Development Program

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