PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

by

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APPROVED BY: ____________
DATE: ____________________
DEDICATION

I dedicate this review of literature to my wife and best friend, Kristi as well as my family both immediate and extended.
I would like to thank everyone who has ever put time and effort into getting me where I am and for making me who I am today.
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Abstract

The purpose of this review is to provide the history of professional development, the barriers to successful professional development, and successful strategies, structures, models and procedures on how to create meaningful professional development. Many different journal articles, books, websites, and other reference materials were researched during the writing of this paper. The findings support schools evaluating their current professional development philosophy and reconfiguring their professional development structure and delivery using the characteristics of effective professional development and key questions as their guide.
There are a number of problems with professional development within our public schools. Lack of focus, lack of accountability, lack of follow through, and inconvenience are just a few of those problems. In recent years, state and federal government legislators have passed numerous educational laws and standards, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC), that are designed to increase the accountability of our schools, teachers, and administrators. Those legislations require specific amounts of time on specific subjects according to School Improvement Plans for professional development. There has been an urgency to make every minute count during professional development. Tulipana (2007) stated that making every minute count, with respect to faculty development, is a huge undertaking with the limited time available.

The Revised School Code of 1976 for the State of Michigan (SOM) establishes all the guidelines, laws, rules, and regulations that school districts, schools, administrators, teachers, and support staff must follow (SOM, 2009). There have been dozens of revisions and addendums since its inception. In 1993 the Michigan Legislature added professional development, Part 21 A, to the school code. Section 1525 of the professional development law states that:

“State and federal funds appropriated by the legislature to support professional development and education may be used for the following: (a) Professional development programs for administrators and teachers. These programs shall emphasize the improvement of teaching and pupils' learning of academic core curriculum objectives, as measured by Michigan educational assessment program, the Michigan merit examination, and other criterion – reference assessments;
collaborative decision-making; site-based management; the process of school improvement; instructional leadership; and the use of data and assessment instruments to improve teaching and learning for all pupils.” (p. 207)

According to Michigan legislature, not only is improving teaching and learning the goal of professional development, it is the rule of law. The state can withdraw funding for professional development if the board feels that the professional development opportunities are not:

“(a) Not in furtherance of core academic curriculum needs.

(b) Not constituting serious, informed innovation.

(c) Of generally inferior overall quality or depth regardless of who sponsors or conducts the education or training.

(d) Not in compliance with the requirements of section 1526.” (p. 208)

Withholding of professional development funds does not appear to be common. However, the argument can be made that lack of meeting curriculum needs, lack of innovation, and a lack of quality is common in our professional development.

The EPE Research Center (Swanson, 2004) defines professional development as an ongoing, or continuous, learning opportunity that is available to various educational personnel. We do not have ongoing, continuous professional development. The EPE argues against the form of teacher in-service days at the beginning of each school year where an expert on some various topic of education is brought in from outside of the school district to speak on the topic. The EPE Research Center (Swanson, 2004) asserted that this style of delivery for professional development lacks consistency, fluidity and coherence. Swanson (2004) argues that it is impossible for educational staff to follow through with and utilize all of the information that gets packed into a six hour PowerPoint during a one day in-service.
With increased accountability, increased rules and regulations at the state level, and inconsistencies described by the EPE Research Center important questions arise such as: What are the barriers to successful and productive professional development? How can school teachers rethink professional development opportunities so that teachers and students benefit? How can we implement successful professional development models into our schools?

Statement of Problem

The professional development that was offered to educational staff is perceived as not useful or valuable because of various flaws and hindrances with the topic, structure, and focus.

Research Question(s)

Two research questions guided this inquiry: What are the characteristics of effective professional development for secondary schools in rural settings? What, if any, barriers exist to implementing professional development for secondary schools in rural settings?

List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCLB</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
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<td>EPDP</td>
<td>Eisenhower Professional Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESEA</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Education Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISD</td>
<td>Intermediate School District</td>
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<td>RESA</td>
<td>Regional Education Services Agency</td>
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<td>SOM</td>
<td>State of Michigan</td>
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<td>NCEE</td>
<td>National Commission on Excellence in Education</td>
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<td>SOM</td>
<td>State of Michigan</td>
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<td>EESA</td>
<td>Education for Economic Security Act</td>
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<td>NCES</td>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics</td>
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<td>IES</td>
<td>Institute of Education Sciences</td>
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<td>PES</td>
<td>Planning and Evaluation Service</td>
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<td>IASA</td>
<td>Improving America’s Schools Act</td>
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<td>NCTAF</td>
<td>National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future</td>
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<td>NWREL</td>
<td>Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory</td>
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<td>OERI</td>
<td>Office of Educational Research and Improvement</td>
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<td>USDE</td>
<td>United States Department of Education</td>
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<td>ASCD</td>
<td>Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development</td>
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<td>NSDC</td>
<td>National Staff Development Council</td>
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<td>NMSA</td>
<td>National Middle School Association</td>
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<td>CCSSO</td>
<td>Council of Chief State School Officers</td>
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The history of professional development in schools dates back to the mid to late 1950’s and was connected to the passing of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Specifically, “The act [NDEA] contains statutory prohibitions of federal direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution,” (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2004).

The NDEA allowed the federal government to provide schools with monies for various aspects of education, including improvement of teacher quality, while asking the schools to focus their efforts more on science, mathematics, and technology. Initial federal legislation such as the NDEA did not contain accountability standards or rules and regulations for how the money was being spent.

After the NDEA, in 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as a part of President Johnson’s Great Society programs. The ESEA was much more specific than the NDEA and established many different mandates that revolved around funding public schools including many of our current “Title” programs (ESEA, 1965). Most of the monies granted to schools are through the Title I and Title II programs which are for low-income students and professional development respectively. More specifically, Title II monies are granted to states and local ISD’s or RESA’s for two purposes. The first purpose is to increase the academic achievement of our students by improving the quality of our teachers and administrators (ESEA, 1965). The second purpose of giving money to local educational agencies is so that the government can hold them accountable for students’ achievement (ESEA, 1965).
With this governmental program a question arose: How does a local educational agency improve the quality of teachers and administrators? The common sense answer was that the local educational agency provides local schools with professional development opportunities.

During the 1960’s, 1970’s, and 1980’s education reform took a backseat to civil rights reform. However, in the early 1980’s, education came back to the forefront thanks in part to a publication named “A Nation at Risk.” In 1983, President Ronald Reagan formed the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE). One of the first reports argued:

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament". (NCEE, 1983, p.5)

The report maintained that the United States had failed her students, even in light of the positive gains made by the NDEA and ESEA. Clearly, things had to change or we we’re going to lose the educational and economic race with the rest of the world.

A Nation at Risk, although not true legislation, had a tremendous impact on America and was the foundation for many school’s restructuring and compliance of requirements per the report’s recommendations (Weiss, 2003). The report had five recommendations in all. The first proposal was the establishment of tougher graduation requirements. The second recommendation
was higher standards and expectations for students. The third recommendation was lengthening the school day and year. The fourth recommendation was to have teachers be better prepared. The fifth recommendation was citizens holding educational leaders responsible for funding the stated recommendations (NCEE, 1983).

As a response to A Nation at Risk, our government enacted the Education for Economic Security Act (EESA) in 1984. The purpose of the EESA was to improve the quality of the teachers and teaching in the fields of math and science (EESA, 1984). With respect to purpose, the EESA was very similar to the NDEA. The government argued for better education in our math and science classes. Author Julia Koppich pointed out that the NDEA was a military response, the EESA was an economic response, and that the federal government often turns to its schools in the midst of a crisis for salvation (Koppich, 2000). This was a different decade and a different issue, but the government mantra was the same; we need better teachers so that we can get better students to keep us ahead of the rest of the world with respect to military prowess, economic superiority, and educational innovation. The better teaching was to be a result of a new program under Title II called the Eisenhower Professional Development Program (EPDP) (Koppich, 2000). The EPDP has been reauthorized a number of times and renamed, most recently under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act of 2000.

Prior to NCLB in 2000, the United States had another committee with similar findings to that of the NCEE which produced A Nation at Risk. The committee was the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF). This led to more reform, new focuses, and new legislations on teacher quality and professional development. Their information releases and statements on education and teacher quality led to the Improving America’s Schools Act in 1994 and ultimately led to their 1996 report entitled “What Matters Most: Teaching for
America’s Future” (Koppich, 2000). The NCTAF was built on four pillars of thought, strategy, and action (Riley, 2009):

1. To create strong learning teams in schools.
2. To close the gap between teacher preparation and practice.
3. To support professionally rewarding teaching careers.
4. To develop authentic teaching standards and learning assessments.

In the NCTAF report, the commission came up with three statements that are at the heart of and the cornerstone of professional development. “What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn. Recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving our schools. School reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions in which teachers can teach, and teach well” (Hunt Jr., 2000, p. 10).

The NDEA and the EESA were similar to what No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is today. NCLB has accountability standards and control methods as well as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards and assessment measures. According to NCLB, one of the methods of accomplishing their goals is to, “ensure that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement (NCLB, 2001). More specifically, NCLB pushes a rigorous curriculum focused on math, science, and reading. Also, NCLB puts accountability on student outcomes as a result of teacher efficacy. This education reform was a result of progressive thinking occurring in the 1990’s after data was examined from the first decade of the EPDP (Koppich, 2000). The NDEA wasn’t quite as strict.
The NDEA gave monies to schools for various things but the NDEA did not control the individual schools and curriculums.

States began adopting laws and making revisions to their respective school codes during the 1990’s and into the 2000’s after much of this legislation was put into law. In Michigan, the legislators revised the 1974 School Code in 1995 to include professional development. Part 21 A of the Revised School Code states that schools in Michigan must provide one day of professional development during the 1997-1998 school year, two days of professional development during the 1998-1999 school year, three days of professional development during the 1999-2000 school year, four days of professional development during the 2000-2001 school year, and five days of professional development during the 2001-2002 school year and each subsequent school year (SOM, 2009).

Given the historical development, the concept of professional development from a legislative perspective is not problematic. With the historical description of legislation outlined, I now turn to an examination of the process, procedures, structures, methods, models, and underlying themes of current professional development. Further, in what follows, I review how schools “deliver” professional development to educators.

**Characteristics of High Quality Professional Development**

In 2001, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) published the results of a survey and study analysis that they conducted in 2000. According to the United States Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) was developed in 1975 by the NCES to collect data about education issues while only imparting minimal burdens on respondents (Kerachsky, 2009). The NCES (U.S. Dept. of
Ed, Parsad, et al, 2000) is a branch of the United States Department of Education (USDE) under the Office of Educational Research and Improvement whose sole purpose is:

“for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. It fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States; conduct and publish reports and specialized analyses of the meaning and significance of such statistics; assist state and local education agencies in improving their statistical systems; and review and report on education activities in foreign countries. NCES activities are designed to address high priority education data needs; provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of education status and trends; and report timely, useful, and high quality data to the U.S. Department of Education, the Congress, the states, other education policymakers, practitioners, data users, and the general public.” (p. 2)

The sample of 5,253 teachers was taken from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The teachers were both full and part time and came from elementary, middle, and high schools from across the country. The teachers were selected from a sample of 2,209 schools nationwide. That sample was from a population of 81,405 schools listed on the public school universe listing. All the schools in the sample and population were public schools. The samples were taken from a population that was stratified according to grade level, locale (urban/rural), percentage of minority, and enrollment. There was also an eighty eight percent rate of response and the survey that was given was pre-tested for sampling error. The data collected from this data is valid and reliable because of the sound methodology, response rate, and techniques applied by the NCES. The NCES adjusted for sampling errors by pretesting respondents and also recalling respondents
when there was missing or incomplete information. There was also a .9 percent standard error so at the 95 percent confidence level the overall margin of error would only be roughly three percent.

The results of the 2000 survey conducted by the NCES were published and disseminated. According to Parsad (2000) and the other researchers:

- 80% of all professional development activities were based around state curriculum standards
- 18% of teachers reported that their professional development was linked to other continuous improvement programs at school to a great extent
- 35% reported that there was no administrative follow-up or support after the professional development
- Only 73% of teachers reported participating in a professional development activity
- 62% of teachers reported spending eight hours or less on professional development
- Only 61% of teachers surveyed felt well prepared for their job in the classroom
- In all categories surveyed, the only increase between the 1998 survey and the 2000 surveyed occurred in the number of teachers being mentored, up to 22% from 18%

Similar results were found from a separate research study spanning from 1998 to 2000. The Planning and Evaluation Service (PES) is a group of professors from various colleges and institutes that perform longitudinal studies for the United States Department of Education. In this study, thirty schools from ten districts in five different states were surveyed. Although this study
was not as expansive, the schools were still stratified by poverty level and grade level. Porter (2000) found the following results:

- 85% of teachers reported that the professional development was somewhat to not at all collaborative
- 97% of teachers reported that the professional development opportunity contained some or zero active learning
- 67% of teachers reported that the professional development was some to not at all coherent

The need for sustained activities and contact, active learning, collaborative learning, mentoring, and student centered professional development was well documented by others. Researchers and scholars agree that these elements, among others, are the characteristics of successful and meaningful professional development (SOM, 2001; Feist, 2003; Bell & Thomas, 2008; Peixotto & Fager, 1998; OERI, 1997). The legislators in the SOM stated (2001) that quality professional development:

- Is part of an ongoing comprehensive professional development plan
- Is characterized by the knowledge of educational needs of students
- Occurs when educators and non-teaching staff collaborate and share knowledge with each other.
- Requires ongoing reflection.
- Is helpful to all school staff as they work to meet the needs of students

In 1998 the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) published an article regarding professional development. The article lists a number of aspects of effective
professional development including ongoing support for learners, teachers being involved in planning and execution of professional development, and that the training involves discourse and possible trials of knowledge (Peixotto & Fager, 1998). Peixotto and Fager add another important piece to the professional development puzzle with the idea that teachers should be involved in the planning process. Teacher leaders and high quality teachers should be able to collaborate and decide what their needs are to improve the achievement of their students.

In 1997 the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), courtesy of the USDE, published an application that contained a ten-item list of high quality professional development features. Among the features were the assertions that professional development (OERI, 1997):

1. focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community
2. focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement
3. respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community
4. reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership
5. enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards
6. promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools
7. is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development
8. requires substantial time and other resources
9. is driven by a coherent long-term plan
10. is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts.

More recently, a study conducted by the NCES for the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) shed further light on professional development trends. The data resulted from surveys given to schools and teachers from the 1999-2000 and 2003-2004 school years respectively. The NCES was responsible for the collection of data. This study compares, contrasts, and builds on the previous data collected from the NCES in 2000. The NSDC (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, et. al., 2009) reported that:

- 57% of teachers participated in professional development for two days or less
- 83% of the teachers who participated in professional development reported that content or curriculum was the topic
- 41% of teachers reported dissatisfaction with professional development
- Support for and participation in professional development is ultra varied.

The study also analyzed other areas of professional development, compared that data to findings in other nations, and stated these findings (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, et. al., 2009):

- Sustained and intensive professional development for teachers is related to student achievement
- Collaborative approaches to professional learning can promote school change that extends beyond individual classrooms
- More than nine out of ten U.S. teachers have participated in professional development consisting of short term conferences or workshops
- U.S. teachers have limited influence in crucial areas of school decision making
U.S. teachers report little professional collaboration in designing curriculum and sharing practices; the collaboration that does occur appears to be weak.

Finally, the report makes a series of assertions based on recent research and current trends in professional development, both in the U.S. and abroad, on what effective professional development characteristics are including (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, et. al., 2009):

- Effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers.
- Professional development should align with school improvement priorities and goals.
- Ample time for professional development should be structured into the workday.
- Beginning teachers should receive extensive mentoring and induction supports.
- Teachers should participate in school decision making.

During 1997-1998 a group of university professors and research scientists conducted a study of characteristics of effective professional development. The population for the study was science and mathematics teachers receiving grants from the Eisenhower professional development program. Overall, there was a 72% response rate resulting in 1,027 teachers from 358 school districts. The teachers were asked to report their professional development activities. The study found that there are specific features of professional development that result significant and positive effects both inside and outside the classroom including (Garet, Porter, et. al., 2001):

- A focus on content and knowledge.
• Opportunities for active learning
• Coherence with other learning activities
• The form of the professional development activity is significant
• Collective participation is significant
• The duration of the activity is significant

University of Kentucky professor Thomas Guskey has also researched, lectured, and presented his findings on professional development effectiveness and evaluation for decades. Guskey is considered to be a leader and expert in the field of research and evaluation. He has authored numerous articles and books regarding professional development and has also won many awards for his work. In a presentation he gave to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Guskey noted the following regarding effective professional development (2002):

• Begin with clear focus
• Focus should be on learning and the learners
• There must be clear goals
• There must be assessment procedures to document progress

In 2004, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) published a report regarding professional development for teachers. The report was based on research from various scientists, scholars, government agencies, and universities. The report lists ten characteristics of effective professional development as deducted from those various research sources. The report concluded that effective professional development (2004):

• Enhances teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge
• Is based on the best available research evidence
• Incorporates principles of adult learners
• Is relevant and focused
• Is standards based
• Is ongoing and continuous
• Is embedded in daily work
• Is aligned with school improvement goals
• Is collaborative and collegial
• Provides opportunities for discussion, reflection, and follow-up

Barriers to Successful Professional Development

There are many types of barriers that prevent progress and success with respect to professional development. There are specific actions or inactions that become barriers to successful and meaningful professional development. Researchers typically group barriers into four different categories: organizational, cultural, personal, and financial (Gandel & Golden, 2004; Duke, 1993; Garner, 1996; Wild Rose Public Schools, 2009; Peixotto & Fager, 1998). In what follows I will review these four types of barriers in order.

An organizational barrier is something that is done by the school district purposefully or latently to inhibit the growth and development of its teachers. The Wild Rose Public Schools and Duke agree that there are organizational barriers to successful growth and development of teachers. Some of these organizational barriers are (Wild Rose Public Schools, 2009; Duke 1993):

• Lack of input from staff in the planning, development, and execution of professional development plans and opportunities
• Teacher performance standards or evaluation procedures not linked to student achievement or a professional growth plan

• District policies that limit the scope or quality of professional growth and development

• Lack of support or follow through from administration and colleagues

Daniel Duke (1993) concluded that professional growth leading to professional excellence meant that people were performing at the boundaries of their abilities. He was referring to lines that were written about the same subject in A Nation at Risk. Duke also questioned when the last time people in any profession performed at the limits of their abilities. Duke surmised that many people in many professions have not been performing but simply doing a “routine” (1993, p. 702).

Peixotto and Fager also reported on barriers to or ineffective professional development. Peixotto and Fager (1998) noted that several organizational barriers have to be broken down for effective professional development to take place including:

• Not restructuring the school calendar to allow for professional development time

• Not using permanent substitutes for ongoing professional development

• Not scheduling common planning time for teachers to work together

• Tendency for fad or quick fix professional development

• Teacher turnover

• Failure to allow sufficient planning time for professional development

• Attempting to manage rather than lead and incorporate teachers into decision making
A cultural barrier is a negative or inhibiting effect resulting from the behaviors and actions of people belonging to or being a part of a group. Eric Garner stated that when people join a group, eventually they adopt the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of the people in that group in order to become accepted (2009). Eric Garner commented on how relationships applicable to professional development and the cultural barriers as: “It's not always easy and often takes a lot of determination. But making an effort to remove the obstacles, tangible and intangible, that stand in our way can be the key to building relationships that really work” (Introduction Section, ¶1, 2009). When teachers make an effort to remove the obstacles to successful professional development, they build relationships that really work; relationships with leaders, colleagues, and students. Garner also wrote about cultural barriers to success and change and the difficulty of being in a group. When the norms of the group are routine and mediocre, we create a cultural barrier that is difficult to break through. Garner alluded to the idea that teachers want to improve themselves and what they do, but they also want to feel like they belong and are accepted by their colleagues.

There are also a number of personal barriers to successful professional development. A personal barrier is something that inhibits professional growth, purposefully or latently, and comes from within the employee such as attitude, values, and opinions. The Wild Rose Public Schools (2009) and Peixotto and Fager (1998) listed a number of personal barriers to professional growth including:

- Lack of awareness- unaware of importance of professional growth
- Stress- inability to function
- Distrust- no faith in professional development opportunities or administration
- Fear of failure- afraid of inability to comprehend or use development ideas
• Poor time management- cannot balance professional growth time with other requirements

• Comfort- developed routine, not interested in change

• Lack of time

• Pessimism

• Impatience- wanting to see results immediately

• Overloaded/too many demands

• Lack of attention

There are also financial barriers to professional development. There are occasions where Title II funds deplete and there is no money left to pay for conferences, speakers, workshops, or stipends. There are also occasions where individual teachers do not have the extra money required to attend an out of town workshop or conference.

Most of the research regarding effective professional development, including the characteristics that cause successful outcomes and the barriers that exist, has been published and disseminated recently during the last two decades. However, increased focus has been put on professional development for the past five.
Chapter III: Results and Analysis Relative to the Problem

Since the 1960’s the amount of federal and state money spent, the regulations related to, the accountability of, and the overall time spent on professional development all increased. Given the increased focus, it is important for schools and school districts to make those opportunities as useful and meaningful as possible.

The review of literature outlined a number of suggestions and characteristics to include and consider during the planning and execution phases for the professional development opportunity to be considered effective. In this analysis of the literature, I will describe how various researchers, scholars, scientists, and legislators suggest a collaborative process right from the beginning for professional development to be effective. All educational staff, teachers and administrators need to be included in the design and planning process. There also must be clear and concise goals to be achieved from the professional development. Those goals must be the focus of the design and those goals must coincide with the school’s improvement plan. Ultimately, those goals must benefit the students in the end.

During the professional development opportunity there must be significant time available for educational staff to collaborate with each other. The professional development must provide opportunities for active learning, discussion with others, collective participation, and reflection. Also, the professional development opportunity cannot be a one time effort. Effective professional development occurs when the opportunity is ongoing and allows staff to continually grow, constantly reflect, and frequently evaluate the progress of the professional development program to determine whether or not goals are being achieved.

The SOM principles of high quality professional development are very similar to the OERI application. The other authors’ work also points out key features of successful or effective
professional development. The federal government, our state government, panels of college
professors, and independent researchers all agree on many of the aspects of effective and
successful professional development. Effective, meaningful, and worthwhile professional
development has to be planned by teachers and also has to be centered on student achievement.
The plan has to be logical, realistic, and long term. There needs to be substantial support and
follow up from administrators and there also must be ample time for reflection, discourse, and
collaboration amongst teachers. Ultimately, the effectiveness and success of any professional
development plan needs to be determined by evaluating two results. The first is student
achievement. The second is teacher advocacy for the plan.

All of the central pillars of professional development are listed as quality practices by
Michigan state legislators. Feist (2003) stated that teachers have to feel like they are a part of the
collaborative process, allow time for reflection, and be a life long learner. Feist’s description of
quality professional development mirrors that of the SOM with respect to reflection,
collaboration, and an ongoing process. Bell and Thomas (2008) also emphasized the feature of
enduring professional development when they stated that ongoing professional development
opportunities eventually result in better outcomes for students. They concluded that lack of time
for reflection and discourse might negatively impact professional development efforts. Bell and
Thomas further add that professional development argument by inferring without proper time to
collaborate, reflect, and discuss with colleagues, ongoing professional development is moot.

Barriers to successful or effective professional development occur when the
characteristics to effective professional development are not present or prevalent in the growth
opportunity. Many of the organizational barriers are obvious within the professional
development opportunities. Those opportunities are usually one day workshops that involve
mostly lectures from an expert on a certain topic. These types of opportunities do not allow for collaboration, active learning, ongoing and continuous thought and reflection. Often these types of opportunities lack support from administration and also lack follow up because there are no ensuing opportunities on the same topic. These types of disconnects, along with a lack of related activities and opportunities throughout the school year, creates a void in continuity, coherence, and growth of knowledge for teachers.

The lack of coherency that the sample in the PES study was reporting is directly related to the lack of administrative follow up and lack of support reported from the sample in the NCES study. The lack of coherency is also related to the lack of continuous improvement activities and opportunities after the professional development opportunity as reported by the NCES. It is impossible for the concepts, ideas, strategies, and methods of professional development to be logically connected and consistent if those concepts, ideas, strategies, and methods are presented once during an in service day and never followed up with support, help from administrators, or other continual improvement activities based on those new concepts, ideas, strategies, and methods.

These organizational barriers can result in the formation of personal barriers. Teachers can feel distrust, stressed, and pessimistic towards each other and administration when there is not enough time to professionally grow. Teachers can also feel these personal barriers when their style of learning is not considered in the planning and execution of the professional development. Teachers can also feel a lack of awareness, a lack of a sense of urgency, and a disinterest in change if they are not involved in the planning and design of the professional development. Employees would feel more ownership for and accountability towards professional development if they were more involved in the process. In addition, teachers’ pessimistic attitudes can be the
result of the development of a routine followed by an unwillingness to change that routine. Even if the changes were to result in positive effects for teachers and students, teachers could possibly be unwilling to commit to the plan because of the impatience of wanted immediate results.
Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

“It is rare to find professional development program today that is designed and implemented with thorough attention to these guidelines or the factors that underlie them. It is rarer still to find professional development programs that evaluate implementing these guidelines in terms of the effects on student learning” (Guskey, 1994, p. 26). The guidelines and factors that Guskey is referring to are the characteristics of effective professional development. In a meta-analysis of sixteen separate studies since 1990, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) concluded that there were specific similarities between the professional development studies that improve student achievement including (Blank & Alas, 2009):

- 10 of 16 studies had teachers involved in twenty or more hours of professional development throughout the year
- The 16 studies had teachers participating in at least two types of active learning with significant follow up and follow through
- The 16 studies had teacher learning goals that were directly tied to student improvement
- Effectiveness improved with the use of collective participatory learning

The CCSSO conclusions are new, research backed, and data driven. They also provide these recommendations to state leaders. Schools should immediately evaluate whether or not their professional development opportunities include the characteristics of effective professional development. To accomplish this goal schools should create a professional development team
that includes administrators and teachers. The professional development team should survey teachers to gather and analyze data regarding their opinions on whether the current professional development includes the characteristics of effective professional development. Schools should also evaluate whether or not their professional development opportunities are structured in such a way that promotes increased student achievement per the recommendations of various research studies including the most recent from the CCSSO. The professional development team can also accomplish this task through survey as well.

Schools, including any professional development teams, need to ask themselves some very hard and specific questions in order to start changing the culture, climate, and expectations of the school with respect to professional development. Richard Elmore is a professor of Educational Leadership at Harvard University. He is a respected senior researcher and published a model of professional development evaluation for the Shaker Institute. The Shaker Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that commissions original analyses, organizes seminars, sponsors publications and subsidizes selected projects. Its independent board is composed of educators, business representatives, labor leaders, academics and public policy analysts (Elmore, 2002, p. 2). Elmore’s model included a list of questions for professional development evaluation including (Elmore, 2002, p. 17):

- What do students need to know and be able to do?
- Under what conditions will they learn it?
- What do educators need to know and be able to do to help all students succeed?
- Under what conditions will they learn it?
- What rewards and penalties encourage large scale improvement?
• Who will receive these incentives and who decides, using what criteria?

• What material supports lead large scale improvement?

Guskey has also recently developed an evaluation model for professional development centered on specific questions for teachers and administrators (2000). The characteristics of effective professional development as well as the barriers that exist are addressed in his model represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation

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<td>1. Participants' Reactions</td>
<td>Did they like it? Was their time well spent? Did the material make sense? Will it be useful? Was the leader knowledgeable and helpful? Were the refreshments fresh and tasty? Was the room the right temperature? Were the chairs comfortable?</td>
<td>Questionnaires administered at the end of the session</td>
<td>Initial satisfaction with the experience</td>
<td>To improve program design and delivery</td>
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<td>2. Participants' Learning</td>
<td>Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?</td>
<td>Paper-and-pencil instruments, Simulations, Demonstrations, Participant reflections (oral and/or written), Participant portfolios</td>
<td>New knowledge and skills of participants</td>
<td>To improve program content, format, and organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Organization Support and Change</td>
<td>What was the impact on the organization? Did it affect organizational climate and procedures? Was implementation advocated, facilitated, and supported? Was the support public and overt? Were problems addressed quickly and efficiently? Were sufficient resources made available? Were successes recognized and shared?</td>
<td>District and school records, Minutes from follow-up meetings, Questionnaires, Structured interviews with participants and district or school administrators, Participant portfolios</td>
<td>The organization’s advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition</td>
<td>To document and improve organizational support, To inform future change efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills</td>
<td>Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills?</td>
<td>Questionnaires, Structured interviews with participants and their supervisors, Participant reflections (oral and/or written), Participant</td>
<td>Degree and quality of implementation</td>
<td>To document and improve the implementation of program</td>
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5. Student Learning Outcomes

| What was the impact on students? Did it affect student performance or achievement? Did it influence students' physical or emotional well-being? Are students more confident as learners? Is student attendance improving? Are dropouts decreasing? | Student records, School records, Questionnaires, Structured interviews with students, parents, teachers, and/or administrators, Participant portfolios | Student learning outcomes: Cognitive (Performance & Achievement), Affective (Attitudes & Dispositions), Psychomotor (Skills & Behaviors) | To focus and improve all aspects of program design, implementation, and follow-up, To demonstrate the overall impact of professional development |

Guskey addresses the various personal and organizational barriers that exist in this evaluation process as well as focusing on the two major components of professional development: teacher development and growth and student achievement. It is through the collection and analysis of the type of data that the Guskey and Elmore models can provide that schools can begin changing the culture of their professional development to incorporate sound structure and methods that have the greatest potential to impact the education of the teachers and most importantly, the education of the students.

**Areas for Further Research**

More research has to be conducted on schools that have made the recommended changes. Surveys and interviews need to be conducted with schools and school employees that have experienced poor professional development in the past and have now changed the culture and climate of the professional development in their schools. Case studies need to be done to
compare various rural schools and school districts that have made these recommended changes to seek out the similarities and differences in their respective situations.

There is a significant amount of research available on the effectiveness of professional development in general. However, there is a lack of research on schools that have gone through the entire process of bad to good and good to great with respect to professional development. According to Phyllis Hudecki, the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition, schools could direct their resources more efficiently if there was a better understanding of the relationship between professional development and student achievement (Kopf, 2007). A longitudinal study of several schools might be the best method of research to develop a how to or step by step method of improving professional development in such a manner that it provides the best possible odds of increasing student achievement.

Guskey also gave an interview to a periodical recently where he stated the following challenges regarding professional development (Kreider, 2009).

“To obtain proof—by which I mean to show that professional development uniquely and alone leads to improvements in student learning—is very difficult. It requires a level of experimental rigor that is hard and often impossible to attain in practical school settings. But most policymakers, legislators, and school leaders are not asking for ironclad proof. What they want is evidence that things are getting better. They want to see improvements in assessment results or test scores, increased attendance, fewer discipline problems, or decreased dropout rates. Historically, professional development leaders haven't done a very good job of providing any such evidence.” (¶ 9)
As Guskey stated, we need to do a better job providing some evidence and trends rather than roadmaps and proof so that schools can begin going down the right path.

Summary and Conclusion

As described, organizational, cultural, and personal barriers exist that hinder the professional growth of the teachers, the educational growth of the students, and the communal growth of the district. Researchers argue to change the philosophy and execution within the realm of professional development.

According to the literature reviewed, building successful and meaningful professional development takes time, energy, effort, and cooperation. By focusing on characteristics of effective professional development and administratively reducing the barriers, school districts will improve the educational experiences of students and teachers alike.
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