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MID-WESTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER

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MWER Salutes Pittsburg State University on its Centennial Celebration



Pittsburg State University
Russ Hall under construction, 1907

On the Cover

Pittsburg State University is celebrating its first 100 years of service during the 2003-2004 academic year with a series of special activities that pay tribute to the University's rich history. The state legislation establishing the Manual Training Normal School of Pittsburg was signed into law in the spring of 1903. Fifty-four students enrolled in the first classes offered on September 8, 1903 in a borrowed building. The new school was founded to train teachers of the manual arts and domestic sciences. Construction started on Russ Hall, the first building on campus, in 1907 and was completed in 1908. In 1923, the institution was granted full college accreditation and was renamed the Kansas State Teachers College of Pittsburg. The College was granted university status in 1977 and was renamed Pittsburg State University. Today, the University offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in business, the arts and sciences, education and technology, and has a three-part mission: education, research and service. Enrollment has grown to 6,751 students from all 50 states and 47 countries. More than 50,000 PSU alumni live across the United States and around the world. PSU graduates serve in leadership roles for such major companies as Wal-Mart, A. G. Edwards, Toyota and Bridgestone/Firestone.

Information for Contributors to the Mid-Western Educational Researcher

The *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* accepts research-based manuscripts that would appeal to a wide range of readers.

All materials submitted for publication must conform to the language, style, and format

of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th ed., 2001

(available from Order Department, American Psychological Association, P.O. Box 2710, Hyattsville, MD 20784).

Four copies of the manuscript should be submitted typed double-spaced (including quotations and references) on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Only words to be italicized should be underlined. Abbreviations and acronyms should be spelled out when first mentioned. Pages should be numbered consecutively, beginning with the page after the title page. Manuscripts should be less than 20 pages long.

An abstract of less than 100 words should accompany the manuscript.

The manuscript will receive blind review from at least two professionals with expertise in the area of the manuscript.

The author's name, affiliation, mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address (if available),

should appear on the title page only. Efforts will be made to keep the review process to less than four months.

The editors reserve the right to make minor changes in order to produce a concise and clear article.

The authors will be consulted if any major changes are necessary.

Manuscripts should be sent with a cover letter to:

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A Student Learning Model for Community Service Field Placements

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Abstract

Educators recognize the importance of understanding how students integrate community service learning with professional practice. This article provides insight into the student experience as expressed in the voices of pre-service social workers that completed community service field placements. The findings suggest a developmental model of learning with common themes that progressed from basic understanding to integration. Findings also suggest that service learning positively influenced the students in relation to personal and professional performance.

“Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both” (Honnet and Poulsen, 1989). The increasing number of colleges and universities that now have community service learning programs demonstrates the apparent validity of this statement. These programs integrate student classroom learning with interaction in the community. Current research into the effect of service-learning includes study of secondary students (Conrad and Hedin, 1982, Hamilton and Zeldin, 1987, Hedin, 1989), as well as college students (Batchelder and Root, 1994; Giles and Eyler, 1994; Mohan, 1994; Sax and Astin, 1996), students in teacher education (Kahne and Westheimer, 1996; Root, 1994), political science (Markus, Howard, and King, 1994), sociology (Hongagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff, 1994; Parker-Gwin, 1996; Porter and Schwartz, 1993) and psychology (Bingle, and Kremer, 1993; McClusky-Fawcett and Green, 1992; Miller, 1994). Much of this research describes an increase in community-based service after service-learning experiences.

Experienced service-learning professionals recognize the importance of understanding how students integrate community service with professional practice (Long and Heydt, 2000; Kahne and Westheimer, 1996; Root, 1994). Current literature on the effects of service learning on pre-professional students underscores the need to understand the affective and social aspects of the students’ experiences from the students’ perspective (Bacon, 1999; Rocha, 2000). Missing from this body of literature is a discussion of the effects of service learning on social work undergraduate students.

This article enhances the literature in several ways. The findings provide insight into the student experience as expressed in the voices of pre-service social workers. In addition, it relies on students’ reflections to develop a model to describe students’ learning experiences. It also chronicles students’ growth from various levels of commitment toward an on-going commitment to the community through their post-graduation professional choices. Finally, this study complements the literature on community service learning by examining the experiences of social work students who com-

pleted their field placement in a rural southern Illinois community-based agency.

The Case

Undergraduate students interned at the Attucks Community Service Board (ACSB), the only community service agency in rural Southern Illinois providing services for and managed by African Americans. Based on the results of an annual community needs assessment ACSB assists more than 2,000 families with a variety of programs designed to address educational enrichment, substance abuse, food distribution, teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and job training.

To aid the agency in achieving identified needs goals, students developed and implemented workshops for youth that provided education on HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy and substance abuse, tutored teens in pre-job skills, and provided on-going mentoring, academic tutoring and informal counseling. They also conducted a community needs assessment, wrote grants, and attended local community network meetings. Agency meetings addressed staff related issues such as scheduling, staff conflicts, event planning, and matters related to ACSB financing.

While field placements are typical of many human service programs, this project differed from traditional experiences in several ways. First, this was designed as a pre-employment training program to prepare trainees for careers with community-based agencies. An assumption of the training program was that community-based workers maintain a different frame of reference than care workers in traditional counseling practice.

To address concerns about the learners’ adjustment to community-based employment, faculty support was built into the structure of this program through weekly seminar meetings. These sessions provided trainees with a comprehensive understanding of community-based agency social work. They also provided opportunities to discuss issues that arose at the placement as well as to address conflicts with role expectations.

Methodology

Participants and setting

The data included information from twelve subjects who volunteered to complete their senior year field experience in community settings. The students were primarily from ethnic minority backgrounds. Following graduation, each of these students gained employment in their neighborhoods; nine provided community-based services to families and children and three became child and family counselors in mental health or school settings.

Data collection

The study was conducted over three semesters from spring 1999 to spring 2000. Participants worked at ACSB for 440 hours during the course of a semester. In all, participants contributed more than 5,280 direct service hours over three semesters.

Subjects completed reflective logs each week chronicling their learning experience. They identified and discussed major learning experiences and their thoughts on the positive and negative aspects of the week. Each undergraduate completed 14 reflective entries, which produced 168 logs for analysis.

The reflective logs generated a total of 420 potential reflective statements. Of the significant statements made, approximately 300 statements were used in the analysis (71% of the statements in the logs). Statements not considered in the analysis included incomplete thoughts, statements that lacked clarity, or notations that nothing significant happened over the prior week.

Narrative data were also collected during weekly meetings between the faculty researcher and the undergraduates. Subjects spoke informally with one another and the research staff. These sessions afforded students an opportunity to tell the stories of their experiences. Faculty recorded comments reflecting their perceptions of what students had gained from the experience. All responses were coded, and participants verified the records.

Data analysis

The data were sorted into categories that reflected learning themes. These categories include rapport building (51%), agency integration (36%), and community integration (13%). Rapport building referred to the process characterized by establishing a positive and productive relationship with the

clients. This definition goes beyond Sweitzer and King's (1999) model of internship development, in which the initial stage characterized by seeking acceptance from the clients. We sought to expand this phase to include the establishment of the relationship that was mutual and respectful and, at the same time, directed toward producing a positive outcome for the client.

In many cases, the rapport-building phase was voiced by the students in terms of revelations of the role of the student in building respect into the client relationship. One student in the beginning stages of rapport building stated, "My greatest challenge was meeting with a client who checks me out who has two teeth and some kind of speech impediment. I can only make out two words for every paragraph. I realize that she can't help it, so I do the best I can and remain patient." Yet another student voiced the experience of mutual respect reflect in a young child's spontaneous gesture for a handshake following an interview. In that log the student stated, "The high point of the week was after interviewing a younger brother of an alleged abuse victim, he shook my hand. I've never seen or heard of a boy of that age extending a handshake with such sincerity."

Statements that reflected an understanding of agency culture along with seeking ways to contribute marked the agency integration stage. One intern at the community center expressed this process following the first staff meeting of the semester. She stated, "I actively participated in a staff meeting. I learned that the center works with another agency. This meeting allowed me a chance to see how this facility works and what types of things they do. I got to know the staff and that it is necessary for me to learn more about them in order to see where I can fit in."

The third and final category that was developed as part of this analysis stage was called community integration. At this stage, students expressed an understanding of the role the community played in their agency. Often, they expressed an understanding of the need to network with community leaders in order to achieve agency goals. For example, one intern reflected, "I need to work on my professional relations with contacts. The secretary in another agency knows me by name, now. It makes me feel good. " While another intern stated, "Making new business contacts in the community were the highlight. It is always good to learn what is where in order to communicate effectively and to get things accomplished. I also think its important to get my face out their so people can become familiar with me. That way, when people call the office, they don't feel like they're talking to a stranger."

Table 1
Stages in Development of Commitment to Community Service

Phases of Rapport Building	Phases of Agency Integration	Community Awareness	Integration
Basic Communication	Fantasy vs. Reality	Identify Community Needs	Integration with Clients
Power	Understanding Systems	Interact with Community	Integration with Self
Reflection			

The final stage of the analysis included organizing these categories into stages that reflected the students' learning pattern. The reflective statements in each category were organized by time sequence, from the initial dates of the entrees to the end of the internship. This organization was interpreted to infer whether there was a pattern that reflected the growth of the students from one stage to the next. The results of the analysis that produced the model are in Table 1.

Findings

Model of Conceptualization of Community

During the course of the fieldwork experience, the students appeared to progress consistently across a continuum of development. The students advanced from addressing issues of client rapport to an emergent desire to fit into the agency. Following this integration they became aware of the communities issues and its role in influencing program services. Finally, this understanding of community was integrated back into the interaction with the participants in the tutoring program. Once students reached this final stage, they also demonstrated an understanding of the children within a respectful context of their communities.

Phases of Rapport Building

Basic Communication. As they entered the field setting, students appeared consumed with adjusting from their roles in the classroom. This basic communication stage was the first concern they expressed and it was representative of their first three weeks of the service experience. Students often expressed concern over their ability to interact with the children at the program as well as with the adults that they had contact with at the agency and from the community.

One student voiced an example of these concerns during the first week of the internship. She stated, "The high point of this week was meeting the kids in the tutoring program, its weird to deal with so many different personalities. It's just a different experience working with children." Still other comments demonstrated their concerns over their ability to interact with the tutoring students. One student stated, "I learned you must have patience to work with children. Tutoring was the greatest challenge because I haven't even tutored children before."

Basic communication was also the focus with students as they tried to interact initially with the community members. One student stated that interviewing skills were a challenge. He stated, "The most significant thing I learned this week was the importance of interviewing and how you do it. It was tough wording my statements. It was the first time I interviewed a family by myself. I'm getting better at it, slowly but surely." Interviewing was the focus of another reflective log entry in which the student seemed uncertain of his ability to ask the "right" questions and focus their interviews in a way that accomplished their goals. He stated, "Basically, I'm still working on my interviewing skills. I still have

much to perfect, or practice until I feel comfortable. It worked, but I guess there were quite a few facts that I didn't get out of the interview."

Another student who voiced concern about communication addressed these issues as it related to telephone contact. She stated, "The new skill I tried to use this week was being competent on the phone. Yes, its quite simple, but sometimes I get caught up with to many things, and still forget little things like the phone number and my name." This desire to communicate effectively with people outside the agency was shared in another reflection that said, "It was good to learn who is where in order to communicate effectively and to get things accomplished. I also think it is important to get my face out there so people can become familiar with me." The mastery of introductory communication skills afforded students an opportunity for engagement in relationships with the agency and its clients that lead to further personal and professional insight.

Power. By the end of the first month, the interns tended to respond to the children from authoritative positions. They appeared to try to control their clients as a way of coping with their new roles. For instance, one intern expressed, "The greatest challenge was getting the children to recognize who I was. You have to let them know you are not on their level, and they need to respect you." A peer who reflected, "I was able to take an authoritative position with the kids in the tutoring program", shared this sentiment. It seems to work. The children do what I tell them to do. It was encouraging to know that they did listen to me."

An intern shared her classmates' struggles when she reflected on the conflicts between her authoritative experiences in practice and the role expectations she formed as a student. She expressed concern about the imbalance of power toward the social worker when working with children when she wrote:

I had to use the skill of being in a total authoritative and disciplinarian role. This proved to be especially hard after what I have learned in my social work classes. We tend to be people who have a strong desire or belief in what we do. I think we are taught to be open and warm. In this particular training, I felt I could still be the latter described quality, but with a major boundary drawn around me. When working with these kids, it seems that you really need to cut-off a lot of that "warm fuzzy" part of you and show your more serious side.

By expressing concerns over boundaries in relationships, this intern helped understand the initial conflict. These statements would indicate that at least one student was establishing an identity as an adult with boundaries that are different from their friendships. In these cases, the first approach to establish relationships involved being an authoritative figure. Gradually, there appeared to be an overall shift in the students' reactions to their relationships with the clients at the community center.

Reflections. In the following weeks, the interns began to build mutual relationships with the children at the community center. Their reflections included more empathy as they tired to establish working relationships with the clients based on shared respect. The same intern stated this concern as "I tried my listening skills with the children. It seemed to work, a little. Instead of me just telling them what to do and them doing it. I asked them what they want to do." Another intern voiced an understanding of the mutual aspect of the relationship when she stated that she wanted to know her tutoring students better. In particular, she acknowledged, "I have gotten to know one of my second graders a little better. I talked with him about school and what he did over the weekend. I want to get to know my students better."

This understanding of the children's perspective gradually lead to a connection between the child's internal conflicts and their behavior. During the third week, an intern expressed this realization by stating the following.

The greatest challenge was getting one of the kids that I tutor to read a three-page story and tell me what the reading was about. This was challenging because she tried to do anything not to read and understand the book. I also wondered if the reason why it was hard for her to tell me what the book was about was because she did not understand the book.

In time, the interns' reflections helped them identify processes that enhanced their relationships with the clients. Rapport building extended from being comfortable with the clients on an individual level to developing a spirit of connectedness between interns and clients. An example of this was seen in the reflection during the fourth week that stated,

I have gotten to know a few children in my class better this week. I can tell that they are used to me now. I worked a lot with my class. They are acting more well behaved. The children were finally getting used to me and asking for help. Now, I might be able to make a difference.

In general, the interns grew from feeling uncomfortable to feeling confident in their ability to establish mutual and cooperative relationships with their clients. Along the way, they struggled with establishing a balance of power in their relationships and learned methods of interacting that demonstrated respect. Their results included a greater understanding of the learning process of their clients as well as the ability to enlist the cooperation of their students. Their reflective experiences during the first month at the community agency were primarily focused on concerns that centered on building rapport with the children that attended the center.

Phases of Agency Integration

Fantasy vs. Reality. At the onset, the interns seemed challenged to understand the organizational dynamics and to find their own place in the system. In her second week,

one intern voiced this experience in her log as, "It is necessary for me to learn more about the staff in order to see where I can fit in." Another student shared these concerns when she stated, "I sit back and look at all the different personalities in an agency." Both reflections captured an overall spirit of uncertainty about roles with accompanying desires to become part of the system.

After the second week, they seemed to be frustrated about the differences between the agency as it existed and their expectations of how the ideal agency would operate. A reflection that addressed this experience stated, "I learned agencies aren't always as well structured as they appear. Everyone needs to work together and do what they can to make the process move along as smoothly as possible." One of her peers voiced this same concern in her log as; "I learned that an agency goes through an on-going process of change. It can be hectic." Still another log reflected this sentiment when the student wrote, "I learned that it is difficult to get everyone to agree on one thing. I was able to participate in a staff meeting. I learned that organizing functions take a lot of time and effort."

These sentiments regarding the differences between the actual agency and their perceptions of an ideal organization were clarified in a focus group meeting. The students agreed that an ideal agency would have rules that were "set in stone" in which "when they have something to do, it takes priority over tutoring or other projects." Their preconceived ideas about the ideal staff were also as structured as their notion of agencies. They stated that the staff should be "committed to children" and that this would be reflected in their "willingness to work over hours to adjust to the children's need." These concerns targeted staff who appeared to set limits on their time for their jobs with firm boundaries between work time and personal time.

When asked what the interns expected in place of the program designed by children, they gave this description, "That is not what social workers would do. Social workers would tell them what to do and what to put in their skit or they would make them do the skit the social worker wrote for them." Their shared views of the commanding nature of social worker roles were not consistent with the open model that they observed at the community center. These conflicts between expectations and perceptions were a central theme among the students during the first four weeks of their field service experience.

Understanding Systems. Over the second month, the students identified cooperation as a theme in their understanding of successful organizations. In a log entry, one student shared this insight; "I learned how the agency structure was. I was able to see that there was a group effort and group input on the decision making process." Regarding creating an understanding of the agency functioning, another student stated, "It was interesting taking the ideas of three different individuals and making them all work together." Another student clarified the theme of cooperation as a component

of agency function, "I learned that everyone must work as a team and cooperate, or life at work will not be peaches and cream."

As the students progressed in their understanding of the organization and the effectiveness of cooperation, they began to identify roles for themselves. These roles differed based on the student, but by the middle of the second month, each was able to clarify the importance of their contribution to the functioning of the unit. One student expressed the understanding of the importance of completing her own tasks within the context of cooperation and teamwork. She stated,

The most important thing I learned this week was, just do your job. You can't be concerned about what others are doing, and even if you are, the problem may but be remedied. We had a staff meeting on Wednesday. I learned that people need to do their job, and not be so concerned with others. This makes everyone's job a bit more bearable. The greatest challenge this week was dealing with the staff. It can get hard working with those you don't like, but you have to put on a smile and keep moving.

Other students perceived their need to assume leadership in cooperative efforts. One reflection voiced this understanding as; "I learned that in some placements you have to step up in a leadership role. You have to put forth effort to get the product you want." This student was engaged in a goal-oriented activity and assumed a key role in producing the end result.

The growth of the students in their relationships with the agency staff appeared to consume the first two months of the placement. Their initial themes of reconciling their images of an ideal agency with the actual agency evolved into finding ways to contribute within the existing organization. Each student reflected on a desire to make a unique contribution, either through leadership or through participation.

Community Awareness

Identify Community. Toward the end of the internship, the students demonstrated a new theme in their reflections. Students' reflections on this theme connected their understanding of the community to their understanding of the clients and organization. By the third month, they demonstrated a mixture of excitement and concern about their engagements with community members. One excited student wrote, "The high point of the week for me was learning that we would have to do some visits. I thought this would be a chance for some excellent experience."

Students also expressed interest in networking. They wanted the people in the community to be comfortable with them. One student best clarified this interest when she made the following entry in her reflective log.

Making new business contacts in the community was the highlight. It is always good to learn who is where in order to communicate effectively

and to get things accomplished. I also think its important to get my face out there so people can become familiar with me. That way, when people call the office, they don't feel like they're talking to a stranger.

Relationships with community members were also identified as important to help the organization meet its goals. One student wrote, "This week I learned a lot about fundraising and how it relates to our major and public relations. If you want to get donations from people, you must have a cherry personality as well as verbal skills." Another student identified community relations as a key factor in recruiting volunteers. She stated, "I used my recruiting skills and was successful. I think it worked because I know some good people and have good friends that understand my predicament."

Interaction with the Community. Their understanding of the child, family, and community connections contributed to their ability to create community-based programs. One example of this understanding was voiced in a discussion of the need assessment. A student stated,

The greatest challenge this week was actually putting together the need assessment. Since we are distributing them to different populations, we had to keep that fact in the back of our minds. We had to make age appropriate, and educational level appropriate assessments.

Integration

Integration with Clients. By the end of the semester, the students began to integrate community principles and direct interaction with the children in the tutoring program. For instance, one student reflected on an experience that led to integrating a community issue, marijuana use, with the interaction with a child.

The high point of the week was when I took the boys in the program bowling. We all had a great time. We ate pizza, talked, and laughed. I have gotten to know the boys better. Well, when we went bowling, I talked with them. We all had fun. The greatest challenge was dealing with one of my second graders. I overheard him talking about smoking pot. I sat him down and talked with him.

Integration with Self. The need to assume an active role in community activities was voiced by another intern who connected personal action with her prior beliefs about individual responsibility in this statement.

I have already known that if you want to make a difference you have to do something about it. This week really has shown me how things wont happen unless you do something about it. Sitting around a not talking only does so much; you must be an active participant.

Finally, the community experience also provided students with an opportunity to transfer knowledge from the target group to their own lives. One student's statement regarding her experience preparing an HIV workshop provided an insight into the role of self-growth in their learning process.

I learned how important it is to educate the children about sex and STDs. The high point of the week was when it hit me about how cautious you must be to keep from risking getting a sexually transmitted disease. The greatest challenge was putting this HIV workshop together. I am still not done yet but it's coming together.

Implications for Service Learning

Each of the students in this study expressed the same three themes in his or her reflections. Over half of the reflections addressed concerns about the trainees' attempts to establish a relationship that was mutual and respectful while, at the same time, directed toward producing a positive outcome for the other person. It is important that so many of the reflections addressed rapport-building. Given that the prior literature did not identify rapport building as a primary attribute of service learning, findings that point to the emphasis on this theme contribute insight into the learning process of these students.

This study supports the literature on community service learning in several ways. First, these results provide insight into the student experience as expressed in the voices of pre-service social workers. The study chronicled a group of students' growth from various levels of commitment toward an on-going commitment to the community through their post-graduation professional choices. Thus, the model demonstrated the process of learning of a small group of students that successfully used the service-learning experience to establish careers that encompass working with community-based organizations.

The demonstration of service-learning model applied to undergraduate internships in social work enhances the generalizability of the service-learning model. While field placements are typical of social work programs, this project differed from traditional social work experiences in several ways. Among these, were the community aspects of this placement presented which challenged students to adapt to informal organizations that focus on supporting large groups. This project also included weekly meetings with faculty to facilitate student reflections and to tie the community service learning experience to personal and academic knowledge. Finally, the equal emphasis on clinical, administrative and research skills provided opportunities for students to understand the connection between community needs and client services.

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Postsecondary Remediation Policy: Analysis and Recommendations for Ohio's System of Public Education

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Abstract

This paper explores the issue of remediation and the development of remediation policy in primary, secondary, and higher education within a statewide public school system. While much of the discussion focuses on the state of Ohio, other states are also examined. The primary goal of the paper is to discuss and identify the trends and problems surrounding the formation and implementation of remediation policy. The secondary goal is to seek potential long-term and short-term solutions to current remediation problems. Recommendations for improving the academic preparedness and success of students entering public institutions of higher education are also included.

This paper evolved from research undertaken as part of a graduate seminar on higher education policy at the Ohio State University. As the major project for that seminar, we studied the issue of remediation, both in the United States and in Ohio, and, acting as a task force, generated recommendations for improving remediation policy for Ohio's system of public education. Our recommendations were made as if we were advising Ohio's educational policy-makers and stake-holders, including its Board of Regents, legislators, Superintendent for Public Instruction, university administrators and professors, public school district administrators and teacher, parents and students.

In examining this issue and formulating our recommendations, we both learned from and built on a 1997 plan drafted by Ohio's Secondary and Higher Education Remediation Advisory Commission (SHERAC) entitled *A Total Approach: Improving College Preparation in Ohio*. That commission was formed by Ohio's Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents "to create a plan to reduce the need for remediation at Ohio's colleges and universities" (p. 4). However, SHERAC also stated that it wanted to improve the preparation of Ohio's high school graduates while maintaining the emphasis on access that has expanded higher educational opportunities for older returning students, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students. Finally, the 1997 plan stated that the commission's ultimate goal for public education in Ohio was "a significant increase in college readiness among Ohio high school graduates and greater numbers of high school graduates who decide to pursue higher education" (p. 4). As such, SHERAC concluded that remedial enrollments are not a central problem, but rather symptomatic of a larger problem: the inadequacy of Ohio's education system for identifying and addressing a lack of

college readiness until students have moved on to institutions of higher education. While we generally concurred with SHERAC's goals and a number of its findings and recommendations, we wanted to use this opportunity to update Ohio's remediation policy and make it "Y2K compliant".

The Truth-in-Labeling Dilemma

Defining Remediation

Traditionally, placing the label "remedial" on certain students was meant to convey their lack of specific prior knowledge and skills needed in order to function and succeed in a college environment. Thus "remedial" courses were designed to teach them the necessary knowledge and skills that they should already have acquired, and to "bring them up to speed" with their collegiate peers, literally bringing them "back to the middle". However, this common conceptualization of "remedial education" is problematic for a number of reasons.

First, the perception that remedial students "should" have already learned specific knowledge and skills often accompanies the assignment of blame on the student. Yet often students have not had the opportunity to learn what they have been judged to need, either because their high schools did not offer higher-level courses, or because they were not advised to take such courses, or because their teachers were inept. Secondly, because the knowledge and skill base needed to function at *particular* institutions vary, the same student may require "remedial instruction" at one school, yet perform perfectly adequately in standard classes at another. Thirdly, many students who need remediation typically do not lack *all* of the skills needed to function in a particular college. A gifted writer or poet, for example, might

find herself or himself in need of remediation in math, but might be otherwise excellently prepared for college. Fourth, what counts as “remediation” varies between time periods as well as between institutions. For example, over the past twenty-five years, freshman English courses at most colleges and universities have modified their emphasis on the study of literature and now focus more on developing writing and composition skills. Thus, changing educational goals dictate that today’s students may need remedial coursework in a different subject area (e.g., writing versus reading) than their predecessors. Finally, regardless of labels, remedial education can take many forms, including traditional coursework, learning labs, group or individual tutorials, and other support services.

Remediation, therefore, can perhaps best be viewed as teaching someone *specific* knowledge and skills needed to perform in a *specific* college environment. Moreover, the extent to which a particular institution provides remediation is not so much based on facts about the students themselves, but based upon the decisions made by that institution. It is a function of both the academic standards of that institution and its willingness to admit and support students who may not initially be prepared to meet these standards. Thus, while we speak of the “remediation problem” in higher education, it will be helpful to see this as a preparedness problem in order to assess and address it most effectively.

Alternative Labels

The field of education is notorious for incessantly generating new terms and labels, both pejorative (e.g., “skill and drill” instruction) and euphemistic (e.g., “special education”). Often this is done even when there is no consensus about the meaning of the term being introduced, nor about the one to be replaced. Similarly, some colleges and universities have begun to use different labels, two in particular, for practices similar to those traditionally referred to as “remedial education”.

Though it is the less popular of the two, using the term “college preparation” to describe the processes detailed above seems not only vague, but erroneous, since the students taking these classes are already in college. Additionally, it has become increasingly fashionable for postsecondary institutions to claim that they engage in “developmental”, rather than “remedial”, education. At one level, the term ‘developmental education’ seems to have been adopted in an attempt to “hide the body”, that is, to substitute a new label for an old one that had become unpopular from a public relations standpoint. However, there seems to be another factor besides mere advertising involved in this terminological shift. In advocating developmental education, Breneman and Harlow (1998) have defined it as a form of teaching based on student developmental theory, involving such elements as student work groups, increased student participation, and more visual aids. The assumption here seems to be that the students who lack the requisite skills for college work have simply been previously taught through

ineffective methods. Yet, as explained above, it may well be that some “remedial” students are seeing the material in their courses for the first time, and thus “developmental” instruction, as Breneman and Harlow define it, may not be necessary to equip many students to perform well in college. This is especially true since the great majority of students in “developmental” courses are concurrently enrolled in traditional courses, and will be expected to take a number of these “non-developmental” courses to complete their degrees.

Despite this variety of labels, in order to avoid confusion throughout the rest of this paper, we will predominantly use the term “remedial education” to refer to the process described above. Occasionally the term “developmental” will be substituted, only to reflect the language used in other studies or documents.

Remediation in the United States

Institutional Trends

Throughout U. S. postsecondary institutions, a variety of programs and practices have been employed to provide remedial education, with different states and institutions employing different educational policies and administrative procedures. However, one recent trend seems to be the elimination of remedial education courses from 4-year institutions. A 1995 survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that 78 percent of U.S. postsecondary institutions provided remedial courses, whereas about 22 percent did not offer any. Among those institutions that did offer remediation, roughly 66 percent reported that their students did not need remediation. Nearly 22 percent of the institutions stated that the students who did need remediation took courses from other institutions. Additionally, about 27 percent reported that institutional policy did not permit them to offer remedial courses¹ (NCES, 1996).

Remedial Students

Arenson (2000) has calculated that, currently, about 70 percent of high school graduates go on to college, and roughly one third of them are identified as underprepared students for college-level work (p. 1). This observation is supported by the 1995 NCES survey which found that 29 percent of first-time freshmen and 32 percent of all freshmen enrolled in at least one remedial course. Surprisingly, a significant number of students who take college preparatory courses in high school also take remedial coursework. The Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR) from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (1998) found that students who completed college preparatory courses in high school performed better and earned higher grades in initial math and English courses in college than the students who did not take such courses. However, a significant portion of students who took college preparatory courses still needed remediation in college: in 1996-97, nearly 40 per-

cent of college preparatory students at Maryland's 4-year institutions required remediation in math, while about 24 percent needed remediation in reading.

In addition, a substantial number of non-traditional adult students enroll in remedial courses. The National Center for Developmental Education recently reported that about 20 percent of remedial students were over the age of 21 (Breneman and Haarlow, 1998). Furthermore, a 1997 NCES survey identified that in 1992-93, 31 percent of the students who took remedial courses were 19 years old or younger, while 46 percent were more than 22 years old, the traditional baccalaureate degree completion age. Ignash (1997) also found that 27 percent of the freshmen entering remedial courses were reported to be older than 30 years of age. However, according to these same reports, freshmen, both traditional and nontraditional, are not the only students who take remedial courses. The 1997 NCES data indicates that 24 percent of the students enrolled in remedial courses were sophomores, and that 9 percent were seniors. Thus, undergraduate students at all levels participate in remedial education programs.

Furthermore, Knopp (1995) reported that students enrolled in remedial education courses were similar to those who did not in terms of age, gender, and aspiration for post-baccalaureate study. Students who enroll in remedial education courses were reported to spend only a small portion of their academic life in such courses. For instance, in 1995, 69 percent of remedial students at the public 4-year institution spent less than one year in remedial classes, and another 27 percent of them spent exactly one year in such course work. Among such students at public 4-year institutions, 84 percent of them passed or successfully completed their remedial mathematics or writing courses (NCES, 1996).

Finally, the graduation rate for students who complete remedial coursework is similar to that of other students, although their retention rate is somewhat lower than those who have not taken such courses (Esposito et al., 1997; Adelman, 1998). For example, the 1995 NCES survey (1996) reported a high retention rate (75 - 100 percent of all freshmen) in 32 percent of institutions that provided remedial education, and 23 percent of such institutions also exhibited a high retention rate for freshmen who enrolled in remedial education courses. Similarly, Adelman (1998) reports that the graduation rate of students who have taken one remedial course at public 4-year institutions (47 percent) is similar to that of the students who have not taken such courses (55 percent). This data seems to indicate that limited remedial education will facilitate many students' success in higher education.

Remediation in Ohio

According to the 1997 SHERAC report, which uses the term "developmental" rather than "remedial", the status of remedial education in Ohio seems "typical of the nation" (p. 6). Based on enrollment data from the fall 1995 term, about 27 percent of the traditional-age entering freshmen (2 per-

cent below the national average), and 25 percent of all freshmen (7 percent below the national average), at Ohio's public colleges and universities were enrolled in at least one developmental course. Also reflective of national trends, 67 percent of traditional-age remedial freshmen in Ohio took only one remedial education course, and those who took more than three remedial courses was 10 percent of the total (p.7).

Examining a few other indicators provides a clearer picture of remedial education in Ohio. For instance, in the fall of 1995, of Ohio's postsecondary students enrolled in developmental courses, 46 percent were enrolled in developmental mathematics, while 22 percent were enrolled in reading courses, and 14 percent in writing courses (SHERAC, 1997, p. 7). Additionally, in Ohio, remedial students are most often enrolled in technical colleges and community colleges (42%), and these two types of institutions also receive a majority (51%) of Ohio's developmental subsidy (p. 8). In 1994, the Ohio Board of Regents reported that the enrollment rate of students in remedial mathematics courses in universities had declined slightly over the past fifteen years, while those at community and technical colleges had doubled during the same period of time.

SHERAC (1997) also conducted a study of placement mechanisms and requirements for 25 2-year and 31 4-year institutions in Ohio and identified that different institutions used different methods to classify students as "remedial". Assessment tools included the ACT, the SAT, and standardized placement tests, as well as internally developed placement tests; however, cutoff lines varied among institutions using standardized tests to determine students' placements.

Causes of Underpreparedness

While a thorough analysis of the causes of students' underpreparedness for college-level work would require an examination of numerous complex social and educational issues, a brief discussion of the factors that contribute to students' college preparedness is useful in relation to our recommendations. These factors include: a) lack of certain educational skills, b) lack of postsecondary educational expectations, c) lack of communication between K-12 community and higher education, d) variation in defining *remedial education*, and e) dual goals in American higher education policy.

First, some of today's students' lack of preparedness for college-level work can be traced to a lack of certain essential educational skills. For example, "a 1992 assessment of literacy skills for adults revealed that about 22 percent of the adult population lacked the ability to perform simple arithmetic operations, and 21 percent could not locate a simple piece of information in a short text excerpt" (NCES, 1997). In addition, only about 20 percent of those who took part in the 1992 assessment could solve mathematical problems requiring two or more steps or integrate information from complex passages. Several researchers have indicated that these difficulties are due to inadequate education and

life circumstances of some groups of students (e.g., Esposito et al., 1997). For example, students who have taken at least one remedial education course were also found more likely to be students of color, students with disabilities, students speaking a primary language other than English, and students coming from low income families (less than \$20,000 annual incomes) (Kalivoda, Higbee, and Brenner, 1997; Knopp, 1995).

The second potential factor impacting the unprepared student population is a lack of postsecondary educational expectations among many high school students. Arenson (2000) points out that “a survey of Miami-Dade Community College students Y found that 60% had not expected to go to college when they were in the ninth grade” (p.1). Thus, by the time many students decide that they want a postsecondary education, they may not have the opportunity to take the secondary courses and to acquire the skills necessary for college-level work.

Third, a lack of communication between the K-12 and higher education communities may also contribute to student underpreparedness. Several states, including Colorado, Georgia, and Oregon, have attempted to enhance collaboration between these two communities by aligning written learning standards for high school students with college expectations. However, such attempts have revealed a lack of information on the part of some. Arenson (2000) quotes one teacher who participated in an Oregon project to improve students’ readiness for workforce and college: “I had no idea what colleges expected. I always thought that if my students graduated, the next step would be for higher education to take it from there” (p. 2). Such ignorance exacerbates communication difficulties and may hamper the smooth transition of students from high school to college.

The fourth factor related to underpreparedness is the variation in defining “remedial education” that exists among postsecondary institutions. Many in the general public and the academic community believe that remedial courses involve work in reading, writing, and mathematics that is *below college-level*, as if a common set of standards exists to define *college-level* work (The Institute for Higher Education Policy [IHEP], 1998). However, those standards vary from institution to institution, as the same student who is tracked into remedial mathematics at one college may be assigned to standard courses at another. Certainly some of this is due to the different academic standards and missions of different universities. However, another reason may be the variation in assessment tools and procedures used to designate “remedial” students. A 1996 Maryland Higher Education Commission study found that, even among institutions possessing similar missions, different assessment and placement procedures are often used to determine remedial status. Additionally, the type of instruction provided as part of “remedial” coursework also varies among institutions. For instance, some institutions include ESL as a part of their “remedial education” program, while others do not. Since most students are uncertain about which college they will

attend until shortly before high school graduation, this vagueness and ambiguity likely creates confusion regarding what requisite knowledge and skills college-bound students should possess.

Finally, perhaps the most prevalent factor impacting the current postsecondary preparedness problem is the pursuit of dual, yet competing goals in American higher education policy: access and excellence. As long as postsecondary systems and institutions attempt to balance these dual goals, they must accept some level of remedial education. What is needed, we propose, is for specific systems and institutions to develop remediation policies that will better prepare incoming students for college-level work and educational success.

Formulating remediation policies

After examining the complex issues regarding remediation, some difficult decisions must be made in order to formulate public policies. While different state systems employ different remediation programs and practices, decision-makers from various states seem to develop remediation policy and plans by taking into account three common factors: financial constraints, existing institutional resources, and statewide academic goals and standards. These factors form the parameters within which statewide solutions are formulated.

Furthermore, every stake-holder views the issue of preparedness through a different lens. For example, legislators often point out that remediation requires double payment by state residents, since it appears that if students are not properly prepared for college by the K-12 system, taxpayers also must bear the additional financial burden for remedial courses, a value-added cost. In order to relieve their constituents of this burden, some state legislators (e.g. in New Jersey, Montana, and Florida) have proposed laws that would make public school systems pay for any remedial work that their graduates are required to take in college (IHEP, 1998, p. 1).

While legislators wrestle with where to place the fiscal responsibility for remediation, some postsecondary administrators are feeling the pressure of absorbing the cost of remedial classes for as many as ten percent of their incoming students. Certain states, such as Arkansas, justify the financial allocations into remediation by comparing them to more expensive core academic programs (IHEP, 1998). However, this quantifiable method fails to note that remediation classes are often prerequisites to a remedial student’s core classes, in essence adding additional costs and time to the overall price of a college degree.

Conversely, some educators, particularly those at community colleges, appear to be turning this financial liability into an asset. For instance, community colleges in Pennsylvania and South Carolina are reimbursed for remedial education at higher rates than are given to four-year campuses (Esposito et al., 1997). This effort redirects remedial stu-

dents from four-year institutions. Regardless of where the students attend college, however, someone is paying the additional tuition bill: the students, family members, and/or other taxpayers. Nevertheless, school administrators, state legislators, and other government officials are revising decisions about subsidizing remedial education by evaluating how to stem the tide, and the costs, of remediation. According to Costrell (1998), there are no conclusive evaluations about what proportion of remedial efforts are even successful, and thus what percentage of the remediation budget is apparently “wasted” on those who never finish a program or graduate with a degree.

In addition to financial considerations, social costs and benefits also need to be examined and evaluated in formulating remediation policy. Costrell (1998) points out some of these non-budgetary costs to remediation, particularly ineffective or unrestricted remediation, including: discouraging higher academic standards in K-12 schools; discouraging K-12 students from achieving academic success; putting pressure on college and university professors and instructors to decrease course standards, thus decreasing a school’s overall quality of instruction; and damaging the education and job-skill development of non-college-bound secondary students who would be held to the lowest standards and most likely to experience reduced occupational opportunities. Unlimited remediation might also hurt an institution’s ability to attract talented students, as a school’s declining academic reputation leads to a reduction in applications from such students.

On the other hand, proponents of remedial or developmental education counter by explaining both the social and economic benefits of remediation, or the costs of doing away with this function of higher education (IHEP, 1998). They cite both public and private consequences, including the fact that students who complete remediation and continue to attend college pay tuition and contribute to campus culture. Others focus on the larger picture of educational access and the social implications of limiting college admission and remediation. For example, critics have labeled the banning of remediation at four-year post-secondary institutions by the City University of New York (CUNY) regents as reckless and harmful, eliminating previously successful diversity strategies (Fields, 1998; Tatum, 1999). Since a greater percentage of minorities fail CUNY’s placement tests, the new policy is criticized for keeping such students out of the four-year institutions in disproportionate numbers.

At another level, a number of states are contemplating the implementation of system-wide standards directed toward increasing the level of academic performance at the K-12 level. In order to accomplish this goal in Georgia, legislators introduced financial incentives to motivate students to improve their academic achievement. Georgia’s college-prep students who earn a 3.0 average in high school and are able to maintain the same average in college qualify for HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) scholarships (GSFC, High school, 2000). In return for their ef-

forts and achievement, such students receive free tuition, paid mandatory fees, and a 300-dollar-per-school-year book allowance for attending any of Georgia’s public colleges, universities, or technical institutes. The HOPE program also provides a \$3,000 scholarship to qualifying students attending Georgia’s private colleges and universities. In 1999, HOPE scholarship recipients made up 43.2 percent of the Georgia-resident students within the 34-campus University System of Georgia, 52.7 percent of the undergraduate enrollment within Georgia’s 35 private colleges and universities, and 74.1 percent of the student body among technical schools (GSFC, 54 percent, 1999). These measures have enabled Georgia to become the top-ranking state system in the nation for the allocation of funds to higher education (GSFC, Georgia no.1, 2000). Such attempts to pursue both the goal of academic excellence and educational access are touted as producing financial benefits for both individual citizens and the state as a whole.

While widespread remediation may diminish long-term academic achievement, the reality is that for the foreseeable future, some type of remediation program will be a necessity for most public institutions of higher education. If, as a recent national report from the Institute for Higher Education Policy (Phipps et al, 1998) asserts, the need for helping underprepared students has been embedded in the very fabric of our nation’s higher education system for well over three centuries, additional financial aid or higher admissions standards will not eliminate the need for remediation. Instead, the ever-increasing enrollment in higher education will probably lead to a corresponding nationwide rise in the number of remedial students. In that case, each state will have to develop its own policies for handling remediation based upon its own goals and resources. What follows is a proposed policy for one state, Ohio.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Weighing Options

In making policy recommendations regarding college under preparedness and remediation in the state of Ohio, we were faced with three basic options:

- A) accept Ohio’s current state of underpreparedness and remediation.
- B) develop intense short term goals with directions for long-term goals for increased college-preparedness and/or decreased remediation.
- C) develop limited, short-term goals, in conjunction with long-term goals that raise the education standards for all levels of public education in the state.

In concurrence with the findings of Ohio’s Secondary and Higher Education Remediation Advisory Commission (SHERAC) in the *Total Approach* plan (1997), our task force quickly eliminated option A. It seemed to us that the SHERAC plan essentially adopted option B, which, though

perhaps effective at reducing popular discontent and political heat, may have also succeeded in hiding underpreparedness and remediation. For example, the *Total Approach* plan established the goal of a 15 percent state-wide reduction in remedial/developmental enrollments by 2001 with continued reductions thereafter (p.15). Moreover, SHERAC proposed the following targeted goals for Ohio's higher education system within that same time frame, less than four years: a 40 percent reduction in developmental enrollments at residential university main campuses; a 30 percent reduction in developmental enrollments at university main campuses with a commitment to access for older students and those who must overcome significant socioeconomic barriers; and a 10 percent reduction in developmental enrollments at two-year institutions (p. 23).

In short, we concluded that the size of the reductions in the *Total Approach* plan was excessively arbitrary and aggressive. Our conclusions rested on the following grounds: the present dispersion of remediation throughout Ohio's system of higher education, particularly the heavy burden placed on two-year and urban institutions; the expected pace that adjustments can be made to K-12 curricula; the increasing emphasis on excellence at Ohio's four-year institutions; and SHERAC's stated commitment to maintaining access for under-represented groups of students. We thus concluded that the proposed reductions would not enable SHERAC to meet all of its stated commitments. Such a large reduction in the percentage of remedial students could not take place at residential and other main campuses without significantly impacting access for many students. Fitting the proposed reductions with the commission's other goals would seemingly lead to a recategorizing, or euphemizing, of remedial/developmental work.

Therefore, our recommendations reflect the attitude of option C above, with both a short-term and a long-term focus on both system-wide collaboration and state-wide systemic change. While the recommendations which are described below are discussed as separate initiatives, they would, in practice, work as interrelated enterprises to accomplish common goals.

Recommendation 1: Align high school requirements with college content and competency expectations.

A. Collaborate on a system-wide basis to communicate college-level expectations and to build a common agenda, including collaboration: between institutions of higher education and those of secondary education; between Ohio's Board of Regents and its postsecondary institutions; between elementary and secondary schools, especially in stressing basic skills needed for college-preparatory work; between business/philanthropy and all levels of educational institutions. Such collaboration will facilitate the accomplishment of the state's larger goals of reducing the need for remedial education, increasing K-12 retention rates, increasing the number of college-bound students, increasing sec-

ondary and postsecondary graduation rates, and improving students' occupational skills.

B. Continue to fund and enhance the Ohio Learning Network, providing grants that would promote collaboration between Ohio high schools, colleges, and universities. Examine the possibility of extending these grants to promote collaboration with elementary schools.

Recommendation 2: Develop a comprehensive K-16 continuum of early assessment and intervention. (see Appendix)

While we saw this as one of the strongest recommendations from the SHERAC plan, we believe that it fell short in two key areas. First, it underestimated or even ignored, the importance of assessment and intervention in the primary grades as critically important for college preparedness. Secondly, it did not offer direction in the areas of assessment and intervention throughout a student's years in higher education. Such a total system approach would promote college readiness early in the educational process, with a series of assessment and intervention strategies that address student difficulties and foster students' college-preparedness. Ohio's 4th, 6th, and 9th grade proficiency tests would be used as assessment tools, giving teachers time to improve student skills. Similar to the 1997 SHERAC plan, our plan encourages the use and improvement of the Early Mathematics Placement Test (EMPT) and the Early English Composition Assessment Program (EECAP), including collaboration between the two for making both more effective. Our approach also involves the development of intensive college preparatory programs to be implemented during a student's senior year or during the summer prior to fall enrollment in one of Ohio's public institutions of higher education. Our goal is that this provision be used to assist decreasing numbers of students, as implementation of our other recommendations focus reduce the need for this type of intensive remediation.

Recommendation 3: K-12 School Reform

A key vehicle for promoting access and increasing diversity in Ohio's system of higher education is to improve Ohio's system of K-12 education. As socioeconomic barriers often contribute to students' underpreparedness for postsecondary schooling, we believe that consistent improvement of K-12 education will help close the learning gap, improving not only high school retention and graduation, but higher education retention and graduation as well. There are six elements to this recommendation.

A. Continue SHERAC's plan for evaluating secondary school performance, including each school's completion rates, student attendance, drop-out rates, and postsecondary decisions.

B. Implement similar evaluations tracking high school preparation in elementary schools to help the state and local school systems better target resources.

- C. Because of the importance of literacy, and especially reading comprehension, to college preparedness and success, undertake multiple strategies to increase the reading proficiency of K-12 students, including:
1. Early intervention, targeting at-risk readers before they reach the fourth grade, and possibly as early as the first grade.
 2. Support of the *Ohio Reads* program.
 3. Continued support for the Ohio Literary Initiative and its goals.
 4. The continued implementation and enhancement of programs targeting at-risk readers, such as *Success for All* and *Reading Recovery*.
 5. A set of grade-level expectations for reading proficiency should be distributed to local school districts, along with proficiency test standards.
 6. Encouraging and fostering the development of programs and practices in local school districts that will enhance reading skills, including summer reading programs, individual and small group tutorials that focus on skill development, and experimentation with innovative strategies that will increase interest in reading (e.g., publishing projects, story hours, book fairs, and book exchange programs).
 7. Fostering parental involvement in their children's reading development.
- D. Promote the teaching of study skills and test-taking skills, especially to at-risk students, to improve academic and test-taking performance.
- E. The Ohio General Assembly should develop a constitutional formula to both increase and more equitably distribute Ohio's education funding.

Recommendation 4: Improve Teacher Education, Preparation, and Effectiveness

- A. Produce better educated, more effective K-12 teachers from Ohio's colleges and universities, improving teacher preparation programs both through colleges of education as well as interdisciplinary approaches.
- B. Provide pre-service and in-service education to improve remedial instruction.
- C. Redefine K-12 teacher certification and licensure requirements to focus on specific standards for teacher knowledge and skills.
- D. Establish performance-based advancement opportunities for successful teachers, including:
 1. Working with the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) to develop statewide policy audits on the status of teaching, including recruitment, preparation, selection, induction, evaluation, and professional development.

2. Encouraging merit pay or awards for teachers whose innovative or effective teaching techniques demonstrate the ability to increase their students' performance and preparedness for college.

- E. Utilize the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve teacher quality, creating partnerships between colleges and secondary schools, and recruiting more teachers in low-income districts (IHEP, 1998).

Recommendation 5: Continue to offer limited remediation at both two-year and four-year institutions, while preserving the individual identities and missions of Ohio's public colleges and universities.

This recommendation reflects the task force's beliefs that:

- a) college preparedness should be addressed as early as possible in the educational process, before students enter postsecondary institutions;
- b) implementing the preceding recommendations will significantly decrease the need for remedial education at postsecondary institutions.
- c) to maintain both access and institutional standards, remedial education will be necessary and beneficial for a certain percentage of students in each of Ohio's public postsecondary institutions; and
- d) Ohio's system of higher education should continue to serve the diverse educational interests and abilities of its students, and therefore individual institutions should have a measure of freedom to devise and implement strategies that will assist in the retention, graduation, and educational success of their particular student populations.

Footnotes

¹ Note: due to multiple responses, the total percentage for responses exceeds 100 percent.

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Appendix

Ohio K-16 Assessment and Intervention Continuum

Grades K-3	Grades 4-9	Grades 10-11	Grade 12	College Entry	College Years
					Progress and Graduation
Progressing Well	Pass	Progressing Well	Pass	Above Cutoff	Progressing Well
Improved Literacy Instruction and Assessment	4 th , 6 th , and 9 th grade Proficiency Tests	EECAP, EEMPT and related assessments	12 th Grade Proficiency Test	College Placement Assessment	College Instruction and Assessment
Needs Identified	Fail	Needs Identified	Fail	Below Cutoff	Intervention and Support
Remediation Through Intervention and Additional Learning Experiences			Intensive Remediation	College Ready	Progress and Graduation

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October 15–18, 2003

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Featured Speaker

Dr. John U. Ogbu

Luncheon Address: The Significance of Minority Status

Education

John U. Ogbu is Chancellor's Professor of Anthropology at the University of California—Berkeley. He received his BA, MA, and PhD in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 1970.

Fields of Specialization and Research

Professor Ogbu is considered one of the leading educational anthropologists in the world. His fields of specialization include minority status and education in comparative perspective, education and culture, and identity. He has studied minority education extensively both in the US and in other societies, including Japan. His research focuses on the differences in school performance among minority groups and the reasons why some minority groups are more academically successful than other groups.

Publications and Presentations

Professor Ogbu has published several books on minority education. His recent book, *Black Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* (2003), examines school and community factors contributing to the low academic performance of middle- and working-class Blacks. He has also published nearly 100 journal articles and book chapters on minority education, culture and intelligence, identity and schooling. His work has been published in Croatian, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, and Spanish. His ideas and research have been the subject of professional sessions at the American Anthropological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the American Sociological Association, among others. Additionally, he has made numerous presentations in various forums in both the US and abroad.

Professional Organizations and Services

Professor Ogbu is a member of the National Academy of Education, the International Academy of Education, a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Anthropological Association and Royal Anthropological Institute. He has served as the chairman of the UNESCO Committee of Experts on Transfer of Knowledge and was a member of the Social Science Council Committee on Research on the Urban Underclass.

Honors and Recognition

Throughout his career Professor Ogbu has received numerous honors and awards. In *Eminent Educators: Studies in Intellectual Influence*, by Maurice Berube, (Greenwood Press, 2000), Professor Ogbu was featured along with John Dewey, Howard Gardner, and Carole Gilligan as four of the most influential intellectual figures in American education in the 20th century. Additionally, in 1998, he was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Contributions to Educational Research Award by the American Educational Research Association.

Featured Speaker

Dr. Patricia A. Alexander

Keynote Address: Rethinking Schooling as Academic Development

Dr. Patricia Alexander is Professor and Distinguished Scholar-Teacher in the Department of Human Development at the University of Maryland. She is Past President of Division 15 (Educational Psychology) of the American Psychological Association, and Vice-President of Division C (Learning and Instruction) of the American Educational Research Association. Since receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in 1981, Dr. Alexander has published over 160 articles, books, or chapters in the area of learning and instruction. She has also presented over 150 papers or invited addresses at national and international conferences. Currently, she serves as the co-editor of *Contemporary Educational Psychology* and *Instructional Science* and is on 9 editorial boards including those for *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Educational Psychologist*, *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *Mathematical Thinking and Learning*, *Learning Disabilities Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Literacy Research*.

Among her many honors and awards, Dr. Alexander is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, and was a Spencer Fellow of the National Academy of Education. Recently, she was named one of the 10 most productive scholars in Educational Psychology, and was the 2001 recipient of the Oscar S. Causey Award for outstanding contributions to literacy research from the National Reading Conference. In addition, she has received various national, university, and college awards for teaching.

Join us for a “**Fireside Chat**” with **Dr. Patricia A. Alexander** Wednesday evening in a casual atmosphere. Refreshments provided.

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Ball State University

Division D: **Dr. Schuyler Huck**,
University of Tennessee

Division H: **Dr. Gregory Marchant**,
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Other Division Speakers: TBA

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The journal is now accepting manuscripts for review and possible publication in 2003 and beyond. Manuscripts are submitted to blind reviews by at least two researchers with knowledge of the literature in the appropriate area. Furthermore, the editors will review the manuscript and make the final decision. The review process requires approximately three months.

Manuscripts are accepted from faculty, students, and professionals working in non-educational settings. Membership in the MWERA is not required in order to submit a manuscript for review. The editors encourage the submission of revised papers that have been presented at the annual meetings of the MWERA, AERA, and other professional organizations.

Submit four (4) copies of the manuscript with a cover letter to James A. Salzman, *MWER* Co-Editor, Cleveland State University, Rhodes Tower, Room 1343, 2121 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114. Manuscripts should conform to the style and format described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 4th edition. All manuscripts should be typed, double spaced, on 8 1/2 x 11 paper with 1 1/2 inch margins on all sides. An abstract of less than 100 words should accompany the manuscript. The author's name and affiliation should appear on the title page only. Submissions typically are less than 20 pages in length. If the manuscript is accepted for publication, the author(s) will be asked to provide a disk file (WP 5.1 or higher on a 3 1/2 inch high density IBM formatted disk) as well as a printed copy of the final version. Please note that the editors reserve the right to make minor modifications in order to produce a concise and clear article.

Questions regarding the journal or the submission of feature columns should be directed to the editors.

James A. Salzman, (216) 687-5048, j.salzman@csuohio.edu

Jane Zaharias, (216) 687-4585, j.zaharias@csuohio.edu

Mid-Western Educational Researcher

Call for Feature Writers

The *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* is a scholarly journal that publishes research-based articles addressing a full range of educational issues. The journal also publishes literature reviews, theoretical and methodological discussions that make an original contribution to the research literature, and feature columns. There are four issues of the journal published annually.

The journal is now seeking writers interested in contributing to three of its feature columns.

- 1) The **Conversations** column involves an in-depth, focused interview with a prominent person. Columns are generally up to 3000 words in length and must be accompanied by a photograph of the person interviewed.
- 2) The **Book Review** column focuses on a notable book, either a new publication or a "classic." Columns are generally up to 2500 words in length.
- 3) **Voices in Education** is a column which assembles pithy quotes or opinions from prominent persons or representative groups of individuals. The column addresses a range of topics with wide appeal to the education community and readership. Use of telephone or e-mail to assemble quotes or opinions is recommended for accuracy. Columns are up to 2000 words in length and assume a casual format.

The editors of the journal make final decisions on the acceptance and publication of feature columns. Questions regarding the journal or the submission of feature columns should be directed to the editors.

James A. Salzman, (216) 687-5048, j.salzman@csuohio.edu

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Using Assessment to Inform Instruction

Carmen R. Giebelhaus
Educational Testing Service

While listening to National Public Radio, I heard a guest quote Woody Allen as saying, “When you are dissecting the truth, it just may die on the table!” As researchers we seek truth and then dissect it, trying to explain so that it can be replicated or changed. So, at the risk of killing the truth, I am going to address an issue in education that I have considered and studied for some time: assessment. Assessment used not as a tool for determining grades or the achievement of our students, but assessment used to improve and inform our instruction.

Assessment has long been considered a nemesis to faculty at all levels of teaching. It is considered by most to be the method of evaluating the level of student learning that occurs. It is the basis for decisions about promotion and retention, about who graduates and who doesn’t. Assessment is the most universal measure that employers use to determine the quality of the candidate for a position. Over time, assessment can shape students’ expectations, experiences and even their identity and perceptions of self-worth.

Assessment, and the resultant grading, is a powerful force in the hands of educators, but is it being used to its fullest potential? Probably not. Why? Because assessment can and should be used as more than just a means to measure student learning; it should also be used to learn about our own teaching. College and university faculty, like their counterparts in K-12 education, could look no further than their own classroom assessments to examine their teaching, the curriculum, as well as student learning in their classroom in order to become more effective teachers.

Recently, my son called me from college asking me for some advice on a paper he was assigned in a class. He briefly told me what it was all about and asked me for some pointers as to how he should approach it. Before I would help, I had him FAX to me the assignment as written by the professor. I was pleased to see that it was a wonderfully crafted assignment that required the students to think about the issues and apply knowledge gleaned—a great assignment that would measure the students’ ability to use multiple resources to critically think about an issue. When I phoned my son back and asked him to tell me what he thought the assignment was and the direction he thought he needed to take, I was surprised that he seemed to have little understanding of the assignment or the processes he should use to complete it.

I realized that this was the kind of written assignment with which he and his peers had likely had little previous experience. It took about ten minutes for me to explain to him the assignment: the process that he would need to use

in the background research and reading and then the approach to synthesizing the information to respond to the questions posed about the issue for the paper. Several weeks later I was pleased to hear that he had received an A on the paper. When I asked him how others in the class had done, he exclaimed “Boy Mom, I did really good . . . most of the others got C’s and D’s!” When I asked if the professor discussed the results, explained what he had wanted, or given students an opportunity to redo the paper with additional guidance, he said that he had not.

This assessment scenario, I’m afraid, is repeated time and again on college campuses everywhere. Professors assume that students have had experiences with the kinds of activities they want to use as assessment and, therefore, spend little time preparing them or explaining the process and expectations. Then, once the “grading” has been completed, faculty do little to assist the students in learning what the assessment was suppose to measure. How often have you heard in the offices and halls, “I can’t believe how badly these students did on the paper I assigned. They sure don’t teach them to write in high school!” Lost is the “teachable moment!” Lost is the opportunity for faculty to “learn” from the assessment that they use for measuring students learning! And, ultimately, lost is the student learning that could have occurred.

This issue of using assessment to learn about teaching became of particular interest to me in my work with college and university faculty across the country. In talking with faculty about why their students may have difficulty on the teacher licensure exams, it became apparent that knowledge of mandated assessment (whether this is state mandated, professionally mandated, or otherwise) and the role faculty in preparing students for such assessments is generally missing. The most commonly heard comments from faculty are defensive, “Isn’t that the students’ responsibility” or “I refuse to teach the test!” or “What about academic freedom?” These comments reveal a lack of understanding regarding the power they have to shape the thinking process of students, the power their own classroom assessments have on the development of critical thinking. It has nothing to do with ‘teaching the test’, nothing to do with academic freedom. It has everything to do with accountability.

Like their counterparts in K-12 education a decade earlier and continuing today, university and college teacher education faculty wrestle with the issue of state and federally imposed accountability measures (like those imposed by the Title II or NCATE). In the area of teacher education, accountability issues are gaining greater interest by faculty and administrators. All faculty in teacher-preparation institutions—arts and sciences and teacher education—have a stake in helping students pass their teacher licensure tests and, on a

Editor’s Note: The editors wish to apologize to Dr. Giebelhaus. This Presidential Address from the 2002 Conference was inadvertently left out of the Winter 2003 issue.

larger scale, equipping their students with the knowledge they will need for entering a classroom. The tests are mandated by state education departments as part of the licensure requirements, and the performance of students from every teacher-preparation institution is monitored by the state, and by the public. Consequently, college and university faculty share the public responsibility of producing candidates who possess adequate content knowledge from the liberal arts and sciences and pedagogical skills to begin teaching.

In addition, the passage of Section 207 of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1998 (Title II) raises the stakes somewhat further for teacher preparation institutions. This act requires that states that are recipients of Higher Education Act funds and all teacher preparation institution that receive federal financial assistance report annually on teacher preparation and licensing. Each state determines what specifically will be included in the reports submitted by its teacher preparation institutions (assessments, etc.) based on the general guidelines the federal government provided. This information is then compiled and reported to the federal government by state departments of education. It is based on these reports that continued HEA and other federal financial assistance is determined for states and their institutions of higher education. In other words, passing rates on teacher licensure assessments will, in part, determine whether universities and colleges qualify for continued federal funding.

Each state makes determinations of licensing requirements and what is reported to the federal government under Title II. Nearly all have chosen some sort of test; thirty-eight have selected some part of Educational Testing Service (ETS) Praxis Series assessments as part of the teacher licensure/certification requirements which will be reported under Title II. Therefore, as the single biggest supplier of such assessments, ETS has learned a great deal about why some students have difficulty on what is essentially a college achievement test . . . assessment of basic competency within a discipline. . . and what faculty should know. Although my comments about assessment and how it can be used to improve classroom instruction are based in large part on what I have learned from the Praxis II assessments, I believe that it is applicable to all assessment—high stakes or classroom.

Since educational accountability is not simply a teacher education issue, but a university-wide issue, the questions that we all must be ask are “Where do we go from here? What do we do now?” University administration and faculty from all disciplines should look at assessment—classroom and high stakes—as a way to inform. We should consider what we can do to improve our ‘product’—knowledgeable and competent graduates. Using assessments improve instruction and ultimately the product we produce will require three things: a working knowledge of the assessments, a systematic program curriculum alignment effort, and an intensive personal examination of the way we teach and assess for student learning.

A Working Knowledge

High stakes assessments, like the teacher licensure assessments, frequently cause candidates difficulty. There are

a number of reasons why candidates may have difficulty passing high stakes licensure tests but the primary one is that there is a lack of understanding or knowledge about the tests. As a result, candidates often do not prepare adequately. Perhaps the most troubling finding we have made is that many do not appear to take the tests seriously. Exit polls conducted by ETS have shown that 33% of Praxis candidates—fully one-third—do not prepare for the tests in any way. They do not review course materials, do not examine the free Tests-at-a-Glance materials available from ETS on the web (and usually available in Schools of Education or Testing Centers on their campuses), and do not study purchased preparation materials, either from ETS or anyone else. Needless to say, many of these candidates go on to fail the tests. They may try taking the tests several times without passing (demonstrating that taking the test is not itself effective test preparation).

Failure to prepare adequately or not take the test seriously stems from not fully understanding the nature of the assessment. Many candidates and their professors think of such tests in terms of the SAT which we have learned cannot be studied for. The Praxis II teacher licensure exams and other high stakes assessments, however, are different from the SAT. These tests assess content knowledge—a body of knowledge and skills that candidates will need in order to practice in a profession. Candidates and their professors should think of them in terms of other licensure tests in field like law, accounting, real estate, and cosmetology. Serious preparation for the licensure exams in each of these fields is a given. The teacher licensure exams cover the content of the field, just like other licensure tests, and potential teachers have everything to gain from study and advance preparation.

Preparation, however, is more than just studying for a test; preparation is also the entire program curriculum. The teacher licensure tests like Praxis II tests assess a candidate’s knowledge of the content area he or she wants to be licensed to teach. Even in areas of pedagogy, such as Elementary Education, tests measure knowledge of pedagogy, not actual practice. As part of a licensure process and assurance that a beginning teacher will do no harm, many licensing agencies require evidence of content mastery before a candidate is assigned his or her own class as teacher of record. Planning and implementing a serious, thoughtful review gives candidates a chance to think about the subject they intend to teach, to fill in gaps in their knowledge, to make connections among courses and concepts, to give serious attention to concepts their students are likely to have trouble learning, and to think about ways of teaching those concepts.

Faculty should be aware that licensure tests, like Praxis II tests, are unlike other tests candidates have taken. On such tests students are asked to demonstrate a deep understanding of their field by demonstrating an ability to integrate, explain, apply, synthesize, and evaluate, using the basic knowledge of their field. Their scores often show that demonstrating understanding is difficult for them. Sometimes such tasks can be far more difficult than simply recalling more sophisticated information, even if this information has been learned in higher-level courses in college. Certainly

success on these assessments is partly a matter of content coverage and a candidate has to have studied the information (and ought to review it thoroughly) before taking the test. But a candidate must also understand the basic concepts of the field and their interrelationships, and be able to explain them in their own words.

Towards Curriculum Alignment

The national trend for standards-based education in most states has resulted in carefully written standards for what students should know and be able to do, often emphasizing conceptual understanding over recall. Teachers must have command of the concept-based understandings that are mandated for their students. It is, therefore, important for faculty that prepare teacher candidates to understand as much about these assessments as possible—in terms of the characteristics of the assessments and types of items found in the assessments (both multiple choice and constructed response items)—in order to provide the kind of assistance to teacher candidates that they may well need.

First, however, it is important to note that in the test development and the selection processes for each of the Praxis II teacher licensure assessments, ETS ensures that practitioners from the teaching field—teachers and teacher educators—have determined what the tests will contain. In addition, the practitioners in a state determined which tests will be used for licensure in each subject area, and helped decide what score candidates need to achieve to become licensed. This is how professional licensure works in most fields: those who are already licensed oversee the licensing of new practitioners. When a candidate passes a teacher licensure assessment like the Praxis II: Subject Assessments, the citizens and the practitioners in the state can be assured that the beginning teacher has the knowledge required to begin practicing in the profession.

University faculty often find it helpful to understand what each of the tests assess specifically and how it does so. Again, the topic specifications are determined through a multi-step process which centers on feedback from professionals in each field; therefore, ETS publishes for each assessment a bulletin that describes in general terms what each test measures and the format of the assessment . . . that is, what the test covers or the specifications. These bulletins (known as Test-at-a-Glance Bulletins) are provided to each university free of charge and can also be accessed on the ETS web. Sample items and scoring guidelines are included for each assessment. The test specifications for high stakes assessments are not and should not be a secret.

This test specification information is a valuable resource for faculty, both for knowing about the tests and especially when considering curriculum alignment issues. There are often gaps in what students need to know and be able to do and the information and skills assessed on the licensure examinations. This may occur when programs have not been revised to meet new standards established by the learned societies or when courses intended to address specific areas of the content are taken after the testing. Faculty should consider the structure

of the programs to determine if the appropriate courses are included to meet the knowledge requirements of the assessment (competencies) and if the courses are taken in an appropriate, logical sequence. It should be remembered that not all courses address each competency and those that address one particular competency may not address it equally. Therefore, the curriculum alignment process should also include a careful examination of not only what courses are required, but the level of exposure in each course to the relevant standard(s) or competency(s). Once this curriculum alignment process is completed, it can be used as a tool for articulation between and among faculty and instructors in the various disciplines involved in the program area preparation. It can also be used to assist faculty in course development and improvement.

ETS also provides each college and university where Praxis II assessments are required a yearly Institutional Summary Report. This report provides detailed information regarding candidate performance from that institution on each of the assessments. Where the number of candidates on an assessment exceeds 10, the candidate performance is broken down by sub-categories allowing the institution to examine where weaknesses in the curriculum may occur. Recently, I spoke with one university group that used this data received from ETS to examine candidate scores in each sub-section of the assessments to determine if there were weaknesses in the program. The faculty in the English Education program, for example, found that candidates even when they passed the assessment overall, scored lower in one area—language and structure. As the faculty examined the program curriculum—what and when courses were taken by students—they discovered that often students sign up and take the assessment before taking the primary course that addresses the “language and structure” standard or competency. This was a curriculum alignment issue, but not one in which a course needed to be added; instead, it was an alignment issue to address when a course needed to be scheduled within the program of study.

Often programs of study have the appropriate courses but the sequencing of them may be off, or sometimes the “options” allowed within a program do not address the standard equally. Carefully examining programs to determine that they do address each of the standards and competencies required is important. A yearly re-examination of the curriculum in light of student performance with the aid of the ETS Institutional Summary Report document would be a useful exercise rather than waiting once every five years for NCATE review.

Informing Instruction

Finally, as faculty, we presume that students come to our classes with certain prerequisite knowledge and skills attained in high school or other college courses that are essential for success in our classes. We also presume that they are able to make the connections between what they have already learned and the topics and content of our course. Unfortunately, all too often this is not the case. Students view courses as separate entities. One metaphor relates students’ view of courses as prescriptions . . . when the pills are

gone the bottle is put away not to be looked at again. How do we ensure that what we teach is, in fact, learned in a manner that is usable beyond the final exam of our course?

University and college faculty should begin to consider the impact of instruction, both presentation of material and assessment of knowledge, for **all** students not just teacher candidates. Assessment of previous learning and integration of such learning into current course work will require each faculty member to examine the curriculum and the way he or she teaches. Using student assessment to inform our instruction will also force us to examine what and how we teach.

What are ways that faculty can discern whether students understand something? One of the most basic is by the questions they ask. In addition, instructors can informally assess understanding by listening to a student explain something to another student, or to you. Instructors can tell whether students understand something when they can apply it to an unfamiliar context, or try to link it to another concept (e.g. prior knowledge—How does/did XXXX impact XXXX?). When faculty is aware of how their course content fits into the program of study, they can relate new information to that previously learned. For example, in an educational methods course, requiring the students to examine a practice or concept in relation to the theoretical foundation learned in their Learning Theory or Human Development courses forces students to use prior knowledge—to link theory to practice. My students were always amazed that I would ask them to do this; they were surprised that I knew which courses or course content they needed to consider. It is also possible to determine if students understand when they can explain how they know what they know. Students should be required to consider new concepts in light of previously learned information – not that faculty must re-teach, but instead faculty must model and expect that students use information gleaned from other courses/contexts/experiences.

These assessments of learning don't have to be formal—with the right classroom tone of openness and sharing, and willingness to make mistakes in the service of correcting understandings (isn't that how the greatest breakthroughs in understanding have come about throughout history?)—quick, informal assessments can help you gauge, and correct, some of the most important concepts. Such assessments should not apply to teacher candidates alone. Students who plan to go on to graduate school, professional school, or careers in industry may very well possess the same misunderstandings (or their own, different misunderstandings) of the fundamentals of the discipline. These and other simple instructional strategies will force the kinds of critical thinking and problem solving that is the mission of higher education generally.

Some years ago, I was teaching a graduate course in research methods. I was concerned when I found that my students could list the various characteristics of each research design, but were not able to connect those characteristics to the appropriate design when placed in the context of a hypothetical situation. Upon reflection and some trial and error, I discovered that I had not promoted the kind of thinking in my class that required students to think about what the research designs might look like. Like many, I had used primarily a lecture approach when the students needed to discover and rehearse using actual research scenarios. I eventually had small groups come up with “mock” designs and the class members critiqued the efforts using the gained knowledge of research design characteristics. The skill that my students would be required to use was to develop a research project, not simply know the characteristics of each design, but to apply the characteristics in a design for their thesis research. It was my responsibility to ensure that students had both the requisite knowledge and skill.

In education at all levels, the responsibility for student learning is shared between the students and the teacher. Each has a role. As a teacher, my role is to facilitate student learning by any means possible. If I find that students are not understanding or able to use information in the manner that will be required, then I must adjust my approach so that they can be successful. This is not “teaching the test,” it is ensuring that the agreed upon content and skills are mastered. The students' successes are my successes.

When faculty learn about the high stakes assessments—both the content of professional tests and the skills required—they can and should examine their approach to address the needs of the students. Am I facilitating the needed knowledge and skill? Are my assessments a good measure of not only what they know, but of how that information needs to be used? These questions suggest the kind of reflective practice that we try to instill in each of our preservice teachers, so why shouldn't we model it for them as a means to more effective teaching?

All professors and their colleagues need to understand whatever professional assessments their students must undertake to enter a profession. This paper simply has to do with teacher candidates. Yet if anything is to be learned from the last several years working with faculty around the country that prepare teachers, it is that we generally do not know what the state's expectations are of our students. And now, all faculty in all teacher preparation institution have a stake in helping students pass their teacher licensure tests and, on a larger scale, equipping their students with the knowledge they will need for entering a classroom; we are, in a very real way, being held accountable for the “product”

Individual Professional Development Plans: In Search of Learning for Teaching

C. Richele O'Connor
Wright State University
Janet Herrelko
University of Dayton

Abstract

This study is the continuation of a 1999 qualitative study in which the researchers examined the implementation of Local Professional Development Committees in the state of Ohio. This descriptive study examined the Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP) of 133 teachers. Resultant data indicated that, from the wide array of possible selections for professional development (PD) including many that did not have any associated cost, thirteen different types of activities were chosen. The majority of teachers selected the traditional means of earning PD credit: university course work, in-service workshops, and conferences. The research revealed teacher confusion with this new form of earning credit. For example, the fourth most frequently selected PD activity, which the researchers categorized as In-Class Activities, was defined as pedagogical activities conducted within the confines of their own classrooms or actual classroom teaching obligations. Recommendations were made for ways to make PD more meaningful to the individuals and for ensuring that PD supports respective school districts in the attainment of continuous improvement goals.

Few would argue that better prepared teachers results in better schools and higher achievement for students. Also, most would agree that tantamount to better prepared teachers is effective professional development. While we have known for a very long time that accountability, follow-up, and long-range planning are critical ingredients for effective professional development, we have not yet come close to making effective and long-lasting professional development for teachers a reality (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; Guskey and Sparks, 1991; Hirsh and Ponder, 1991; Lieberman, 1995). There is a movement afoot, however, to help teachers redefine true professional development. Several states require teachers to be more specialized in their pursuit of professional development; two states, Ohio and Wisconsin, require their teachers to participate in a peer review of their professional development goals. These plans are evaluated for the relationship of the plans to school goals and student needs. The states of Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and South Carolina now require teachers to be more specialized and more focused on school improvement (Boser, 2000). While several states are attempting to change the way professional development is defined, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the types of professional development teachers in Ohio are selecting for their personal professional development goals. Specifically, we will discuss two aspects of this program: one, the history of Ohio's implementation of these requirements; and, two, how 133 teachers in five Ohio school districts are approaching the newly mandated professional development.

In 1996, Ohio legislators authorized the establishment of Local Professional Development Committees (LPDCs). The purpose of the LPDCs was twofold: one, to focus the

responsibility for renewing certificates/ licenses from the state to local school districts and agencies; two, to develop a legal structure that provided educators with "the freedom to shape their own professional development" (Ohio Department of Education, 1998). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to expand on our original research in which we examined how six different school districts implemented these Local Professional Development Committees that were to be set in place in the Fall of 1998 (O'Connor and Herrelko, 1999). In the present study, we examined the Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs) to determine if any patterns emerged as to the types of professional development that teachers were seeking. We also sought to determine if teachers were engaging in the type of professional development that is related to the pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) that researchers and theorists have maintained is needed. Specifically, we chose to analyze the IPDPs at two academic levels: all elementary level teachers and secondary teachers in the content areas of Literacy and Mathematics. We examined the areas of Literacy and Mathematics because these two areas represent our areas of specialty.

In the rest of this section, we present the script of a Reader's Theater presentation in order to introduce the problem we have researched. Readers' Theater mimics the presentation format of the ancient Greek theatre (Dixon, Davies and Politano, 1996). Choruses of voices contribute the dialogue and remain on the stage while other chorus groups present. Our use of this technique is to express the frustrations and excitement held by teachers when they discuss professional development. Following the Readers Theater example will be a description of our methodology, results, and discussion.

Scene One: The Way We Were

- #1: Art Teacher (whining): I don't wanna go to Friday's in-service. It looks like a huge waste of time.
- #2: Math Teacher (agreeing): I know! I've already used all the software programs they'll be talking about.
- #3: Science Teacher: Why can't we have in-service programs that are relevant. I'd really like to know more about the new Science Standards.
- #4: Complacent Teacher: Suits me fine. I'll pick up the rest of my continuing education units and get some papers graded.
- #2: Math Teacher: And you'll probably get the paper read, front to back, too.
- #1: Art Teacher: You know, there's this art teacher over in another district doing some neat things. I wish I could visit that teacher and get continuing education units for that!
- #2: Math Teacher: Yeah, me too! I was offered an externship at a bank last summer. Lots of the stuff I'd be doing relates directly to the Stats class I teach. Now why couldn't I do that and let that count?
- #3 Science Teacher: And have you heard about this National Board Stuff? It sounds like something I'd be interested in doing but, Whew! Talk about a ton of work! I don't know if it's worth it. Wouldn't it be great if you could get credit for something like that?
- #4: Complacent Teacher: I don't want things to change . . . I like getting credit just for showing up and for taking a course in Industrial Arts, even though I'm a Biology Teacher. You should see how nice my boat is lookin'!

Scene Two: Gone With the Wind

- #1: Researcher: The one-shot, one size fits all approach to professional development has been ineffective for such a long time.
- #2: Another Researcher: What everyone wants for students, a variety of learning opportunities, seems to be ignored when it comes to the professional development of teachers.
- #3: Researcher: Professional development must now be looked at differently. The teacher must be viewed more significantly as a learner, and . . .

- #1: Researcher: It needs to be looked at more as a career-long process. Also, reflection, and how it impacts student learning, is a critical component.
- #4: Someone in Ohio: We, at the Ohio Department of Education, agree! We have even passed a bill in Ohio which requires teachers to complete Individual Professional Development Plans.
- #1: Researcher: What does this plan look like?
- #4: Someone in Ohio: What it looks like depends on the Local Professional Development Committee. In theory, however, the Ippy Dippy permits teachers to explore a wide variety of learning opportunities.
- #2: Researcher: What kinds of opportunities?
- #4: Someone in Ohio: Grant writing, national board certification, school visits, supervising student teachers, inquiry, action research . . . the sky's the limit as long as the teacher's goals are relevant to the needs of the district, the school, the students, and the teacher.

Scene Three: Back to the Future

- #1: Art Teacher: Have you filled out your Ippy Dippy yet?
- #2: Math Teacher: Not yet, I'm still trying to decide if I'm going to try for National Board Certification or not.
- #3: Science Teacher: Wow, if you do that you'll be set for the next five years. I think I'm going to count my time as a cooperating teacher and then maybe write a grant. I think I can also count my summer trip to Colorado.
- #4: Complacent Teacher: Maybe this isn't so bad after all if you can study rocks in Colorado and get credit for it.

Methodology

As the focus of our study, we selected five Ohio school districts located in the western part of the state that varied in size from a district of approximately 4,000 students to one of 26,000 students. The locations of the districts represented rural, suburban, and urban school districts. Two of the districts were part of the state's pilot program, while three districts implemented the state mandate at the required due date. The state's pilot program required districts to create their LPDCs a year prior to the mandatory fall 1998 implementation. The Ohio Department of Education provided funding up to \$50,000 as the incentive for districts to participate in

Table 1
Description of the Five School Districts Serving as Participants

School Districts Characteristics	Auckland	Dearborn	Diversity	Target	Verde
Student Population	4,060	5,993	26,000	7,440	4,581
Number of Teachers	193	241	1,700	460	245
Teacher-Years of Experience	15.5	16	15.3	14.5	16.5
LPDC Pilot District	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
State Funding	Yes	None	Grants	Yes	Yes
Number of IPDPs reviewed	17	43	39	11	23

the pilot program. Table 1 shows the demographics of the five participating school districts.

To answer our research questions, we reviewed the Individual Professional Development Plans of 133 Teachers. We obtained access to the IPDPs by asking the key informant for each site, the individuals we had interviewed in our previous study, for permission to view their IPDPs.

Of the 133 IPDPs reviewed, most were Elementary Teachers. In totality, our review included 115 Elementary Teachers, nine Secondary English Teachers, and nine Secondary Mathematics Teachers. For each of these teachers, we simply noted the type of PD activity they planned to pursue. For example, consider an Elementary Teacher who, in the next five years, planned to pursue seven different professional development options. Table 2 shows how each separate activity was coded as a single entry in one of the professional development categories.

It is important to note that if teachers indicated that they were pursuing a Master's Degree, we coded that as a separate category since teachers did not indicate the individual courses they would be taking in pursuit of that degree. Other patterns emerged as we coded the data. For example, we identified a separate category within the course work category for course work that appeared to be unrelated to the teacher's certificated area or classroom teaching assignment. As the example in Table 2 indicates, we also found that teachers were identifying activities that would be defined as normal professional work, such as using specific teaching strategies within the confines of their actual classrooms. For such activities, we created the category "In-Class Activities." These were activities that could have been, but were not, related to outside professional development activities such as professional reading or workshops. Once the data were coded and placed in their respective categories, we then totaled the number of activities represented by each category. The compiled data across all possible categories are shown in Table 3 in the next section of this paper.

Results

The resultant data show that teachers are still relying heavily on the traditional avenues for professional develop-

ment: college courses and workshops and/or conferences. The thirteen different options that the 133 teachers selected are shown in Table 3. A category that emerged as we reviewed the data, In-Class Activities, warrants further discussion as the category with the fourth highest frequency. While our research question was to examine three different types of teachers, we found our data to be limited in that such few Secondary English and Math Teachers had completed IPDPs in their respective districts. That is, only nine Secondary English and nine Secondary Mathematics teachers submitted IPDPs at the five sites. However, the trend of Elementary Teachers selecting mostly course work and workshops/conferences as their main source of professional development was a trend that was also maintained by both groups of Secondary Teachers.

Both Elementary Teachers and Secondary Math Teachers indicated, in 17 and ten different instances, that they would be pursuing course work and/or Master's Degrees that were outside of their respective teaching areas. Only three Secondary English teachers indicated that they would be pursuing course work outside of their teaching area.

Many teachers were vague in describing their professional development intentions. However, for those teachers who gave specific information regarding their intentions, we noted these intentions. We found that out of all the different types of course work elementary teachers were pursuing, 16 of the courses or master's degree programs were related to Literacy. Imbedded within these intentions were concerns for raising student achievement as measured by the Ohio Proficiency Test. In the area of Conferences/In-Service/Workshops, thirteen of the Elementary Teachers indicated a preference for sessions related to Literacy. As teachers identified areas of research in the category of Professional Reading, eleven teachers identified Literacy as an area of study.

Math activities were broadly defined as math methods, use of technology, and science and math integration. As teachers listed course work as a professional development option, 20 listed such activities as ones they were planned to pursue. For conferences, workshops, and in-service activities, 26 different math activities were named. Three math topics were

Table 2
Coding of Professional Development Options

Professional Development Activity	PD Category
Enrolling in a college course on Using Computers in the Elementary Classroom	Course work
Writing a grant to obtain classroom materials	Grant writing
Attending upcoming district in-services	Workshop/Conference/In-service
Attending a statewide conference on Literacy	Workshop/Conference/In-service
Serving on a building committee such as the Technology Committee	Committee work
Improving lessons to reflect higher-level questioning	In-Class activity
Serving on a district committee such as the Language Arts K-12 Curriculum Committee	Committee work

Table 3
Activities Selected by Frequency

Activity/Level	Elementary	Sec. English	Sec. Math
1. Course Work (in teaching area)	75	10	3
Masters Degree (in teaching area)	17	2	0
Course Work (outside teaching area)	5	3	7
Masters Degree (outside teaching area)	12	0	3
2. Conferences/Workshops/In-Service	96	5	7
3. Professional Reading/Study Groups	19	1	0
4. In-Class Activities	17	0	1
5. Committee Work	11	4	1
6. Teaching a Class	8	2	6
7. Peer Observation	9	2	0
8. Educational Travel	2	0	0
9. Cooperating Teacher/	8	4	2
10. Mentoring	3	1	0
11. National Board	2	2	0
12. Portfolio Work	5	1	0
13. Externship	4	0	0

named as subjects to pursue in the category of professional reading. They selected activities where they could learn how to use manipulatives, develop hands-on math problems, or learn how to apply technology in the math classroom. Secondary math teachers indicated a primary focus on receiving an advanced degree in technology. Therefore, as we looked at the types of content-specific activities selected by teachers, the data show that, among the specifics noted across course work, workshops/conferences, and professional reading activities, teachers identified Literacy activities 40 times while selecting math-related activities 49 times.

Since the IPDPs of most teachers were quite vague in nature, we failed to learn enough about the specific types of learning teachers are pursuing in Literacy and mathematics. As more teachers complete IPDPs in the coming years, perhaps we will be able to glean more information about the types of content pedagogy being pursued.

The results were significant, we believe, in showing that teachers are making some attempts to take advantage of this new approach to professional development activities. That is, for the 133 IPDPs we reviewed, the following nine options were named for a total of 71 different times: committee work, teaching a class outside of their classroom assignment, peer observations, educational travel, serving as a cooperating teacher, mentoring a new teacher, vying for National Board Certification, portfolio work, and externship.

Lastly, as shown previously in Table 1, the school district with the second lowest number of teachers submitted the highest number of IPDPs for review. We learned that the reason for this high number is that they were requiring all teachers to complete IPDPs irrespective of when their current certificate expired. In comparison, the IPDPs from another district showed how teachers were taking advantage of the grace period which enables teachers to renew their certificates under 1987 standards. Such standards permit teachers to reduce the number of hours required for re-

newal by one semester hour or three continuing education units (CEUs) for each year of successful experience. This former way of granting CEUs is commonly known as the “seat time” rule. Since the main function of the LPDC is to determine if the requirements for renewal of certificates under 1987 standards and requirements for licenses under 1998 standards have been met, we found this variance to be noteworthy in that only one district indicated this in the IPDPs that we reviewed.

Discussion

Economics usually plays a major role in the decision making process; we believe this is a main factor in teachers choosing course work as their main source of professional development activities. At the present time, the only way that most teachers are able to receive raises in salary is by completing more course work. Until teachers are paid and promoted on the basis of what they know, this trend of relying on course work for professional development will probably continue. We recommend that the basis for the acquisition of such knowledge should take on various definitions, definitions that include a much broader picture than the typical course work and workshop-type options. In other words, we believe that the types of professional development that are recognized by Local Professional Development Committees will only become a more prevailing force when it becomes recognized by the pay scale that determines teachers’ salaries. Perhaps bargaining units for teachers will heed this consideration when negotiating pay raises for their teachers.

As our earlier search indicated, wide differences exist in the way districts are approaching the newly defined professional development. The Ohio Department of Education very clearly stated that “the identified goals and strategies are relevant to the needs of the district, the school, the stu-

dents, and the educator” (ODE, 1996, p. 18). While some districts were more diligent than others in ensuring that all four outcomes were met, some districts did not ensure that the four aforementioned goals were met. We believe that districts can come closer to meeting their goals if they are overtly articulated to their teachers during the IPDP process. For example, in one district where the use of technology was a district goal, some teachers selected technology from the list of district goals that was provided to them during the IPDP process. Therefore, we would recommend that, since the intent of the mandate is for teachers to connect their professional development goals to the four outcomes, the LPDCs should uniformly adopt some type of form by which teachers must show a direct connection for how IPDPs are addressing all four outcomes. Similarly, if school districts and school buildings find that their teachers are not pursuing the types of professional development that they believe are necessary for improvement, they would be wise to consider a reformulation of goals that could serve as guiding forces for teachers’ choices of professional development activities.

As we reviewed the professional development the teachers selected, we could not understand why teachers were justified in counting hours spent during their contractual teaching team as professional development hours. While we applaud their desire to change and improve some of their daily interactions with students, we found it odd that they would consider such efforts to be professional development. Even stranger was that such efforts would gain approval from a LPDC. If such efforts in the classroom are direct results of professional reading or the completion of course work, then we believe that the goal of professional development has been accomplished. However, while the time spent conducting professional reading or attending classes is clearly outside the daily duties of a teacher, the time spent in the classroom applying such newly gained knowledge is, simply, put, doing one’s job. We recommend that the Ohio Department of Education should make it very clear that in-class activities should not be counted as professional development hours.

As the data show, we found that teachers were pursuing activities that were, in our opinion, outside of their teaching field. In describing the IPDP, the Ohio Department of Education (1998) states, “Each required professional development that is completed must be clearly related to the area of licensure and/or classroom teaching” (p. 18) Apparently, teachers were approved because they could make a case for showing how a class in supervision or leadership could apply to their daily interactions with students. This, however, begs the question: Why would LPDCs approve professional development that is geared toward enabling the teacher to gain a credential that will take them out of the classroom versus gaining knowledge that can be linked with students’ needs and the strategic plans of school buildings and school districts?

In closing, we eagerly await a review of more IPDPs in the year 2002 when one of the grace periods by which teachers could avoid the new standards will be over. However, teachers who held professional certificates prior to 1998 will be able to operate under old standards until the year 2014. Confusing? It certainly is, and we sincerely hope that while such differences exist among districts in how IPDPs are approved and regulated, districts and LPDCs will narrow these differences and continue to work toward improving both the process and the product. If the process can be improved, and we believe our recommendations must be part of this process, then we believe the elusive goal of better teacher preparation is closer to becoming a reality. Better teachers equate with better schools. This is the product for which we all strive.

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Priming the Pump: Nurturing Teacher-Researchers through Collaboration

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Abstract

This article reports on the delayed impact of a year-long, collaborative action research seminar on the professional development of a cohort group of teachers. The authors describe the design of the seminar and the guiding principles of the collaborative process. The teacher-researchers reported that, as a result of the seminar and their investigations, they are more competent consumers and producers of research. The effects for individuals ranged from subtle impacts on the ways that they conceived of their professional practices to continuing efforts to produce and disseminate research findings.

Introduction

When I was a child, my family went to Canada every August for our family vacation. In the late 50s and early 60s, the “resorts” we stayed in were rustic, and not the nouveau-rustic of resorts today. We had to bring in our food and supplies for the week—there were no restaurants—and my grandfather would get up early each morning to light the fire, which was our only heat. My favorite remembrance, though, was the pump from which we got our drinking water. As I grew old enough, probably 7 or 8, my brother’s and my job was to fetch the water. We didn’t have the leverage to start the pump with one hand like the adults, so both of us would pull from either side of the handle until the pump was primed and the water started flowing. Once the water started gushing out, one of us would pump and the other would hold and change the buckets. When enough water was in the pump, we would sometimes let go and watch the handle rise up and down by itself, water spurting out the spout. We knew, though, if we had more buckets to fill, that we would eventually have to work the handle to keep the flow going.

That image struck me as I was thinking about the work that Donna and I have done with groups of teachers over the last several years as we have nudged them toward becoming teacher-researchers. We found ourselves “priming the pump” for these remarkable and committed teachers, providing them with some new skills to integrate with their already extensive repertoires in year-long action research seminars. This article presents a look at one group of these teachers as they reflected on the impact that this experience had on their development as researchers one year after they finished the seminar.

Theoretical Perspective

In the educational community, we stand today in a time that calls for teachers and other stakeholders in P-12 schools to act in ways that they have never been required to act before. The rise of scientifically-based researched teaching

practices has been made clearly evident in the work, for instance, of the National Reading Panel (2000) and the recently passed *No Child Left Behind* legislation. In fact, in 2000, Congress introduced a bill that called for increased rigor in both research and evaluation in education. The bill included a call for controlled experiments and appropriate comparison groups in quantitative research, with the intention of producing research that is generalizable, and standards for scientifically based qualitative research. Though the bill did not become law, it does provide additional context to the kinds of research inquiries that higher educators should both encourage and facilitate.

What is Action Research?

The term “action research” has generally been traced to Kurt Lewin, who came to view the practice of “ordinary people” collectively investigating common problems that arise out of practical concerns to be a practice that could lead teachers and others engaging in this inquiry to develop their powers of reflective thought (Adelman, 1993). While there are many subtle shades of meaning in different definitions of action research, Mills (2000) identifies action research as “any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment, to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn” (p. 6). Generally, the sample sizes in these types of practitioner inquiries are not sufficient for action research to be generalized outside of the particular context in which the research takes place. However, it is the systematic nature of action research that can provide the rigor to meet some of the expectations for scientifically-based quantitative and qualitative research that can provide it with increased credibility and replicability.

Even with the lack of generalizability, action research is recognized to have value for the individual teacher-participants who engage in this type of inquiry (Calhoun, 1996;

Herndon and Fauske, 1994; Sagor, 2000). It is also recognized to have a number of potential problems and shortcomings (King and Lonquist, 1994; Nunan, 1994). One problem cited is a lack of training in traditional research methodologies for teachers working under this umbrella (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Gay, 1996). In order for teachers to impact educational change effectively and to be empowered as professionals, this concern must be addressed. To engage in the type of systematic inquiry that addresses the criticism levied against action research and to support teachers in this additional responsibility, Sagor (1997) suggested that "it takes the right mix of culture, history, leadership, and structural support to bring the full power of collaborative teacher research to fruition" (p. 182).

Calhoun (1993) identified three distinctly different forms of action research based on her own work in schools; these were individual teacher research, collaborative action research, and schoolwide action research. In discussing the benefits of each, she noted that it was important to select "one type of action research over another [because the choice] has important implications for the school renewal process" (p. 241). The key to selecting one method is the purpose behind the inquiry.

Design of the Action Research Practicum

Calhoun further suggested that any individuals or groups considering engaging in action research should attend to five elements: (1) purpose and process; (2) support available; (3) data available; (4) audience to whom results will be disseminated; and (5) anticipated side effects of the efforts. With those five elements in mind, we set out to fund, plan, and deliver an action research seminar for interested teachers in an inner-ring, suburban school district.

Purpose and Process

The district received a Goals 2000 grant from the Ohio Department of Education to offer an action research graduate seminar for teachers who wanted to focus their attention on classroom and/or school-wide research efforts. The grant brought together a collaborative effort among district personnel, faculty from three higher education institutions, and the teacher-researchers. According to Calhoun's exhortation, we chose collaborative action research, with the intent of providing explicit support for these motivated teachers. Participants applied for admission to the year-long seminar by proposing a "problem" that they wished to investigate. Though some individuals chose to investigate a specific classroom issue, we believe that they still engaged in a collaborative with their peers and higher education faculty who participated in the year-long seminar.

Support

While participants were receiving graduate credit for a traditional "research" course for the practicum, the committee which drafted the grant and Donna Snodgrass, who designed the course, determined that the teacher-researchers should receive more instruction in quasi-experimental and single-sub-

ject designs, rather than emphasizing traditional research. The tendency of traditional methods to focus on experimental laboratory designs are generally unrealistic for teachers to design and execute. And while confirmatory statistical procedures were presented, discussed, and used by some in their research projects, the instructor emphasized descriptive and exploratory data collection and presentation methods as appropriate, valid, and often under-utilized tools for teachers to use as they investigated the issues in their classrooms or schools.

In addition to learning about research designs and data collection techniques that are useful at school sites, the teacher-researchers were taught skills in utilizing technological tools that could help them to complete their projects. Specifically, they learned to:

1. Access the Internet and other technological databases to search for relevant, useful and up-to-date resources; and
2. Employ user-friendly statistical software packages, such as *SPSS for Windows and Macs*.

The aforementioned skills were taught explicitly within the framework of the seminar meetings. The information teachers gained and skills they developed were reinforced through activities designed to promote collaboration among the participants. Collaboration among classroom teachers, district personnel, and higher education faculty members and graduate students from the participating institutions required the imposition of the semi-formal structure of the seminar setting, while making allowances for flexibility in negotiating processes and procedures that could meet the needs of the various stakeholders. The collaborative network was designed to provide the infrastructure necessary for individual teachers and teacher groups to claim ownership of their projects yet provide as much or as little support as needed (Snodgrass and Salzman, 1997).

Data Available

As a function of the process of action research, the data available were as rich and diverse as the projects themselves. In most cases the data were limited only by the needs and designs of the study. For instance, one study (Anselmo and Kulp, 1997) used a pretest-posttest control-group design with matched pairs of kindergarten students who were below grade level in pre-reading skills. Data included PPVT scores, letter identification and letter matching scores, and scores for identifying initial sounds. Others (Fankell, O'Sullivan, Smyth, and Usaj, 1997; Visoky and Poe, 1997) used qualitative data and exploratory techniques to investigate problems of interest.

Audience

From the outset, teachers were aware that their results would be disseminated in several ways to multiple audiences, the first and most obvious being themselves. However, they were also expected to write up their results for a publication (Snodgrass and Salzman, 1997) that would be presented to the Ohio Department of Education and which has been disseminated from the district office to interested parties. Fi-

nally, all researchers gathered in October of 1997 to share their results in a half-day symposium hosted by one of the member institutions. Though these audiences were planned for in funding through the grant, in addition to these audiences, two of the teacher-researchers participated as members of a symposium at the 1997 conference of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association.

Side Effects

Calhoun stated that, when collaborative action researchers share results, collegiality may be enhanced, especially when those results are focused on problems of genuine concern to a number of the stakeholders. In addition, she noted that some groups “stay together for several years, conducting several studies in areas of common interest while their technical skills and expertise in inquiry continue to grow” (p. 243). Though the grant was not re-funded, this article will further document continued collaboration resulting from the action research process.

The Research Questions

Many school districts are able to sustain these types of efforts in very creative and effective ways under the auspices of grant moneys. Many school and higher education collaborations also work well under these conditions (King and Lonquist, 1994), and this particular suburban district was no exception (Zawislak and Rak, 1997). In discussing efforts at reforming schools and teachers in the classroom, Darling-Hammond and Ball (1997) noted that “Without know-how and buy-in, innovations do not succeed. Neither can they succeed without supports, including such resources as materials, time, and opportunities to learn” (p. 2). District personnel, higher education partners, and the grant provided the supports, both technological and informational, and teachers in this district were able to focus on classroom problems that they wanted to investigate. But, what happens to these efforts when the money and even the infrastructure created to sustain them no longer exist? What impact will this training have for the teacher-researchers who participated? Those were the questions that drove this investigation.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

Participants were teachers (representatives of elementary, middle and high schools) and other district personnel in an inner-ring suburban school district who had completed an action research seminar during the 1996-97 school year. Near the end of the 1997-98 school year, 16 of the 18 people who participated in the action research seminar responded to a survey based on the framework of the model in which they participated.

Of the participants who responded, the average number of years of experience in education was slightly over 11 ($M = 11.25$, $SD = 7.5$). While some were completing

their master’s work and using this course to meet their requirements, at the time of the survey all but one reported having earned at least one advanced degree. Even with this number of advanced degrees ($n = 15$), only two of the action researchers indicated that they had done formal research in the field as a function of their jobs or professional training. Eight others reported that they had engaged in simulated research experiences during their college course work (prior to the seminar), and six indicated that they had had no research experience.

Instrument

The survey (see Appendix A) was developed for this project and contained 18 5-point Likert scale items and 10 open-ended questions. The Likert-scale items were divided into two sections. The first section contained 10 items which prompted participants to compare their present attitudes toward research and research issues with those that they had prior to participating in the seminar. The second section contained 8 items which prompted respondents to reflect on their experiences and the skills they developed during their action research projects. Using Hoyt’s Analysis of Variance Procedure, the survey was determined to be highly reliable ($R = .899$). Though not often used, Hoyt’s Analysis of Variance “produces exactly the same results as K-R 20”, which is desirable because the Kuder-Richardson formulas tend to yield a lower reliability coefficient than other methods, like Cronbach’s alpha (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 261).

The open-ended questions provided respondents with opportunities to construct responses that enabled them to provide examples of their experiences with and attitudes toward research based on their participation in the seminar. The survey also asked respondents to provide demographic data.

Data Analysis

This study employed qualitative analyses to explore the post-seminar effect on participants of an action research seminar one year after they completed their coursework. Specifically, the objectives were to investigate the ways in which:

1. teachers’ participation affected their attitudes toward educational research;
2. teachers’ participation affected their classroom practices; and
3. teachers integrated the new skills, especially the use of technology, that they had learned into their practice.

From the Likert-scale items, we generated descriptive statistics to determine respondents’ general agreement or disagreement with particular survey items related to these objectives. Aggregate mean scores provided the data upon which we drew general conclusions. In some cases, however, data were disaggregated to determine whether respondents’ prior research experience or comfort with technology may have influenced their reactions. These are reported in frequency tables.

We transcribed and analyzed responses to the open-ended questions and have provided representative excerpts to offer a richer view of the context from which participants were responding.

Results

Effects of Participation on Attitudes toward Research

As respondents reflected one year after their participation in the seminar, they reported overall more positive attitudes toward research after participating as compared to those they held prior to their participation (see Table 1). Mean scores for all respondents indicate that they agreed that they now felt more comfortable reading qualitative ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.87$) and quantitative ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.77$) research, as well as engaging in qualitative ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.62$) and quantitative ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.77$) research. The overall attitude toward research (see Item 5 in Table 1) as expressed by participants was positive ($M = 4.13$) but, somewhat surprisingly, also showed a larger amount of disagreement ($SD = 1.02$) than the attitudes expressed toward reading or engaging in both qualitative and quantitative research. Maybe most interesting was the common belief ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.51$) that participants now held that they could engage in research within their classrooms that was as valuable as that which they read in educational journals. One individual summed up this feeling when she reported: "I have now experienced the value of organizing my concerns into a workable plan and measuring its effectiveness. So often I see, or sense, how effective a particular intervention is, but I haven't had the hard data to show others."

Though it was not initially an objective of this study, the relatively larger deviation among respondents to the question regarding their attitudes (see Item 5 above) led the researchers to break down this item by respondents' prior research experience (see Table 2). This led to several discoveries. First, the two respondents who had already participated in field research either disagreed with or were neutral regarding the statement that they now possessed a more positive attitude. In an open-ended response, one of these individuals stated that "this was my third attempt at educational research. With that in mind, the answers to the survey questions have different meaning [for me] than for most participants and may not have the same value." Second, that those with no experience showed the greatest diversity of opinion ($SD = 1.17$) even while reporting a generally positive attitude ($M = 4.17$) toward research. One of those respondents who disagreed with the statement captured some of her negative feelings when she stated that her attitude had not really changed but that "I still like designing [studies] and gathering data but I hate writing it up."

Effects of Participation on Classroom Practices

Of those who responded to this question, 73% ($N = 11$) indicated that their participation had affected their job site performance in the year after their action research projects. Some of those uses were directly related to a specific project, but some appeared to be ancillary effects. One stated that "the intervention [that we devised] was used in our study, and I continue to use it in my classroom besides recommending it to others." Another stated that "I used the knowledge I gained to structure my reading program." Both of these teachers discovered benefits directly related to their own individual projects. Finally, one other teacher discovered in the process of her research that her students tended to "think

Table 1
Mean Scores of Attitudes Toward Research After Participating in Action Research Seminar for All Respondents

Items	M	SD
1. Greater comfort engaging in qualitative research	4.13	0.62
2. Greater comfort reading qualitative research	4.31	0.87
3. Greater comfort engaging in quantitative research	3.94	0.77
4. Greater comfort reading quantitative research	4.06	0.77
5. More positive attitude toward research	4.13	1.02
6. Able to do research on the job as valuable as that in journals	4.44	0.51

Note: $N = 16$. Scores for each statement ranged from 1 = Strong Disagreement to 5 = Strong Agreement.

Table 2
Breakdown of Attitudes Toward Research by Research Experience

Group	N	M	SD
Field experience engaging in research	2	2.50	0.71
Simulated research in college course work	8	4.50	0.53
No previous research experience	6	4.17	1.17
Total	16	4.13	1.02

Note: Groups were categorized on the basis of self-report in terms of prior research experience. Scores for each statement ranged from 1 = Strong Disagreement to 5 = Strong Agreement.

of writing as the ‘mechanics’—physical [act of writing]. [This year] I’ve worked with my first grade class to stress the creativity, thought processes and procedures.” By discovering in her project that she and her students were working from different definitions of writing, this first grade teacher was able to stress other aspects of the writing process in explicit ways, presumably helping students to focus, at the appropriate times, on the psychomotor aspects of writing or the cognitive aspects.

Others, however, seemed to use the results of their research projects as springboards to effect other important issues or concerns. For instance, one second grade teacher’s research sampled students at two elementary schools and focused on the perceptions of minority students by children in multicultural and non-multicultural settings. In the year since she completed this study she reported: “I committed myself to working on the district’s Diversity Committee, as well as my building’s Diversity Committee, to help implement changes I could that [I believed] were necessary [based on] my research findings.” Another responded that her specific project had more of an indirect effect on her practices. She elaborated on this by adding “It has affected my work by causing me to gather and analyze data in a more controlled manner.”

Of the four participants who responded that their project had not affected their classroom practices this year, the responses varied. One respondent simply said “no” without elaboration. One indicated that her training was in research and its application, implying that this is what she did on a regular basis. One other indicated that she had too many other responsibilities this year to revisit the research issues that she investigated but that she hoped to do so the next year. Finally, the last respondent indicated that she “enjoy[ed] reading research articles and determining to what degree . . . ideas and strategies [should] be implemented.

My specific research has not influenced me to alter teaching techniques.”

Effects of Participation on Integrating New Skills into Professional Practice

Since respondents received explicit instruction in research design and data collection, as well as the use of technological tools, there were a number of skills that respondents cited that they had integrated into practice. One of those skills was recognizing the limitations placed on research findings by virtue of the design of the study. One respondent summed this up well when she stated: “Recognizing the limitations of [my] study has helped me to realize that even with our best efforts, one does not have crystal clear, right or wrong answers.” In addition to the careful consideration of research on the basis of design, another respondent identified a change in her thought process as a result of her participation. She stated that “this past year I wrote a grant and included 3 evaluation measures. I now think ‘How can we show the effectiveness [of what we are going to do]?’”

Another focus of this particular objective was to explore teachers’ perceptions of both their comfort level in accessing technological tools and their actual use of technology in improving their professional practices. After participating in the practicum, respondents voiced strong, positive perceptions ($M = 4.25$) about their comfort in using technology. In fact, 14 of the 16 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they had an increased level of comfort using technology, which included the use of the Internet and statistical software packages, to improve their practices. Yet even with this large degree of comfort, respondents indicated noticeably less agreement ($M = 3.63$) and greater diversity of opinion ($SD = 1.50$) in their perceptions of their regular employment of technological tools for the purpose of improving their practices.

Table 3
Mean Scores of Perceptions Toward Technology Use in Improving Professional Practices for All Respondents

Items	M	SD
1. Comfort using technology in improving practice	4.25	1.06
2. Regularly employ technology in improving practice	3.63	1.50

Note: $N = 16$. Scores for each statement ranged from 1 = Strong Disagreement to 5 = Strong Agreement.

Table 4
Comparison of Regular Employment of Technology in Improving Practice by Comfort With Using Technology

Group	N	M	SD
Field experience engaging in research	2	2.50	0.71
Very comfortable with technology use	8	4.75	0.71
Comfortable with technology use	6	2.83	1.17
Neutral	1	2.00	
Uncomfortable with technology use	0		
Very uncomfortable with technology use	1	1.00	
Total	16	3.63	1.50

Note: Groups were categorized on the basis of self-report in terms of comfort using technology. Scores for each statement ranged from 1 = Strong Disagreement to 5 = Strong Agreement.

To explore this further, we broke down the responses to the item on participants' regular employment of technology by their comfort level (see Table 4). It was not surprising to find that the two individuals who were "very uncomfortable" with using technology or "neutral" on the issue did not see technology as being of much use in their improving their own practices. What was surprising was the marked difference in the regular use of technology among those who perceive themselves as being "very comfortable" with technology ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.71$) and those who only see themselves as "comfortable" ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.17$).

In open-ended responses, participants cited a number of technological resources that they used both for completing their projects and that they believed could help them improve their practices. Not surprisingly, the Internet, especially ERIC searches, were cited as helpful in accessing current literature useful for teacher-researchers. One stated that she and her partner used e-mail to contact other professionals. Others noted that they mainly used technology for word-processing. The use of technology was not limited to computers, though. Several respondents cited videotaping as being beneficial to their practices and one noted that she would "like to use more in my day-to-day work." Another teacher noted that he uses microcassette recorders with "all students so that every student [can give] oral samples of a foreign language simultaneously. In a limited time frame (such as a class period), many more students were able to participate because of the use of recorders."

Discussion and Conclusions

One of the major objectives of the member institutions and individuals who planned and executed the action research seminar was to improve teachers' comfort with and ability to consume and create research that had personal value for them and their students. In part, there was an attempt to improve attitudes toward research by supporting teachers in their efforts to investigate their own job sites or classrooms. The intent was that this would compel them to investigate their own theories about teaching and learning, as well as some specific aspect of their practices. The results, as indicated in Table 1, suggest that, even a year later (after the euphoria that comes with the initial funding), these individuals perceive themselves as being capable of both consuming and creating research that is meaningful and valuable.

Certainly this view may reflect some naiveté on the parts of the respondents. The investigators noted that the highest mean score and smallest dispersion (see Item 6 in Table 1) were in response to the teacher-researchers perceiving themselves as able to do research at their job sites that is as valuable as those they read in professional journals. This seems a bit over-reaching in many ways, and published researchers may rightly assert that it is quite an arrogant claim. However, the respondents were not necessarily claiming to engage in and write up research findings that were polished enough to be published in those journals, merely that they could

now do research that had as much "value" as those they have read. In the two years since we first gathered this data, though, several of the participants have demonstrated their skills by having papers of their research published in professional journals (Poe and Visoky, 1999) or presented at research conferences (Bruce, Snodgrass, and Salzman, 1999). One of the participants published an article about the process of becoming a teacher-researcher (Visoky, 1999), while another is continuing to investigate her practice and disseminate the results (Bruce, Salzman, and Snodgrass, 2001). Furthermore, as consumers of research articles in professional journals, teachers read about classroom practices and theories of instruction that they often will adapt or modify to meet the needs of the students at their schools. The teacher-researchers in this study are now reporting that they are capable of investigating their own practices and their own students so that any changes that they make can be driven by the data that they are able to gather. If their perceptions are accurate, they are also more careful (and, hopefully, appropriately skeptical) of the claims that other researchers make in touting specific programs or theories.

Part of the reason for this more careful approach would appear to be related to the skills that participants gained as a result of their participation. These teacher-researchers are now more comfortable accessing information databases on the World Wide Web. This allows them to access multiple viewpoints on any specific topic. They are also more aware of the limitations of research designs, and this recognition surely makes teachers better researchers and better readers of others' research findings. Because they have experienced what it's like to be a researcher, they are clearly more aware and also appear to be more appreciative of the work that is done by educational researchers. Their own responses, as well as their research projects, demonstrated that they have heightened awareness of the need to gather data in systematic ways before drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of specific programs or methods. And, though the funding dried up, as funding always does, it is evident that this awareness has affected the ways in which these professionals talk about their classroom practices and the activities in which they engage to improve their own teaching and their students' learning.

In addition to the skills they have gained, they also appear to have developed attitudes that will enable them to apply theory to practice in ways that have value for them and their students. This was especially true for those teachers who had engaged in some simulated research in college courses. Having already been sensitized to principles and techniques of formal inquiry, they were overwhelmingly and consistently positive in their attitudes toward research after having done their own projects in the most meaningful contexts, their own classrooms and schools.

Lest we give the impression that simply having teachers participate in an action research seminar is a magic pill that can cure schools' ills, it should be noted that these are not your "average" teachers. For the most part, these are

veterans of educational systems who are very motivated. Even with the support provided by district office personnel, various higher education faculty, and others, these people committed to a full year of seminars, in addition to the time required to review literature, gather and analyze data, and report on their findings. All of this while continuing to plan lessons, teach and engage in the myriad other duties that all teachers perform as a function of their jobs. And while graduate credit may have been a motivator for one or two, most of the respondents already possessed a master's degree. In short, most of the participants were the teacher-leaders that schools and school districts already count upon to get the work done that needs to get done. Because they are leaders, however, it may be even more important for them to develop the skills necessary to research their own classrooms or schools. Having developed and applied these skills, then, they will be better able to mentor and support other teachers' efforts in investigating "problems" that reveal themselves in their own classrooms. By applying the techniques of systematic inquiry to practices with which they are already familiar or in which they are interested, these action researchers are poised to make even more significant contributions to their districts than they already do.

Educational Implications

A great deal of money is spent every year on the professional development of teachers, most all of it with the intention of empowering teachers to be better classroom professionals. We hope that these results encourage other districts and teachers to reconsider their own professional development efforts. One implication of the present study appears to be that certain individuals may benefit more than others in an action research seminar like the one described. Currently, many school districts take a one-size-fits-all approach to professional development. Many of these efforts are single-day or partial-day workshops and have little effect on the day-to-day practice of teachers (Guskey, 2001). This particular Action Research Collaborative appears to have made a difference for teacher practice beyond the individuals' participation in the event/workshop/seminar itself, especially for those who already have been sensitized to general research methods and have done some simulated research. It also may encourage districts and higher education institutions to maintain collaboratives in order to provide teachers with the resources that they need to sustain research that is meaningful at the classroom level.

Unfortunately, many of the practices in which teachers engage currently are based on claims supported by anecdotal evidence or are the results of political agendas by individuals or organizations. One need only watch TV or listen to radio to hear educators and others spout off the obvious benefits of their favored programs: Everyone will learn to read through intensive phonics instruction; Vouchers will make public education stronger because public schools will have to improve or close; and so on, ad nauseum. In discussing his concerns over making educational decisions based on the "obviousness" of a claim,

Gage (1991) stated: "One noteworthy characteristic of [many] criticisms [of educational programs] is that they were what might be called nonempirical or, at least, not systematically and formally empirical" (p. 12). This lack of empiricism, he contended, often led people to accepting, as a truism, a principle which is not borne out by later empirical study.

Schools and the professionals working in them are under a great deal of pressure to change in systemic ways, but the process of change must be engaged in thoughtfully. More often than not, change is a difficult enough process for teachers to undergo, one that is made more difficult when teachers are caught in the crossfire of political agendas and lack the evidence that they need to do what is best for students. In attempting to make instruction both sensible and deliberate, action research can be used as a way for teachers to become aware of what their current practices are and on what research foundation those practices are built, if indeed they are built on any explicit foundation. Whether they consider particular practices effective or ineffective, by investigating the practice in a systematic way within their own classrooms, they can confirm or disconfirm their beliefs. In either case, teachers who are action researchers will have the tools and skills necessary to make informed decisions based on empirical and systematic inquiry, rather than on the "obviousness" of a claim.

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Appendix A
Action Research—One Year Later
Questionnaire

For each of the statements below, please circle the number which best indicates the degree to which you “agree” or “disagree” with the statement. Please use the following key:

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

Part I—All of the following items ask you to compare your attitude today with your attitude prior to engaging in the Action Research seminar.

Compared to before I participated in the Action Research Seminar:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I now feel more comfortable when engaging in qualitative research activities, like case studies, in my own classroom/job site. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. I now feel more comfortable when reading qualitative research by other people. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. I now feel more comfortable when engaging in data gathering and statistical analysis employed in quantitative research. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. I now feel more comfortable when reading quantitative research by other people. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. I have a more positive attitude toward the topic of research. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. I feel more comfortable collaborating with others on research projects. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. I feel more comfortable sharing my findings with others. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. Data and test scores now have more meaning for me. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. I now understand why researchers employ the methods they do. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. I now feel that I can do research in my own classroom/job site which is as valuable as the research I read in professional journals. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

Part II—All of the following items ask you to reflect on your experiences in the seminar and/or on the skills you developed.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 11. The doctoral students were helpful in their support of my research. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 12. The university personnel were helpful in their support of my research. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. The central office personnel, like the project directors and Jane Jasper, were helpful in their support of my research. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. I feel comfortable using technology, such as the Internet, to locate information which improves my instructional practices/job performance. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. I regularly employ the Internet to locate information which improves my instructional practices/job performance. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 16. I see few ways in which research activities actually improve classroom initiatives. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 17. I would participate in a research project again. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 18. The action research project was professionally valuable to me. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

Prior to beginning the seminar, how would you have described your attitude toward educational research?

Has your participation in the Action Research seminar changed your attitude in any way? If so, how?

As you look back on your experience in the Action Research Seminar, has your participation affected your classroom work this year? Please provide examples.

In what ways were you supported in your efforts by
Higher education faculty?
District personnel?
Action research mentors from directory?
What effects (if any) did this support have for your project?

In what ways did you use technology to engage in your work? Was this beneficial? Explain

How did you use the results of your last year’s research? Explain

Have you engaged in any additional research this year? If so, describe what you have done? If not, why not?

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