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Introduction: Perspectives on Professional Development Schools

In March 1993, the journal, *Educational Policy*, published a special issue on Professional Development Schools. Only six of the many papers submitted could be published at that time. However, an additional seven papers explored other aspects of this emerging innovation and were also worthy of publication. Given the widespread interest in professional development schools, I believed that the early results of this most important reform deserved a wider audience. Subsequently, I commissioned four new papers that, along with the 13 submitted to *Educational Policy*, constitute this book.

The general concept of professional development schools, regularly established and governed schools that, jointly with higher education, assume special responsibilities for inquiry and the professional preparation of educators, is rapidly becoming a staple recommendation of educational policy. These new kinds of institutions are believed by many to be one of the major features of a reformed system for the preparation of educators, continuing professional development, and research into teaching, learning, and schooling. Although professional development schools are only beginning to obtain a foothold in the educational landscape, the problems and promises of their implementation already have major policy interest.

Despite this general interest in the idea, there are still a large number of different perspectives on just what constitutes a professional development school. First, in *Tomorrow's Schools*, and more recently in *Tomorrow's Schools of Education*, the Holmes Group called for the establishment of Professional Development Schools in close conjunction with research universities. John Goodlad, in *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*, proposed university-based Centers for Pedagogy that would have close connections to real schools. The Pittsburgh school system has been nationally recognized for a number of years for its continuing professional development program in Schenley High School. The American Federation of Teachers has instituted a program of Professional Practice Schools. The National Education

Association sponsors a Mastery in Learning pilot program. Title Five of the Higher Education Act, reauthorized in 1993, calls for the establishment of professional development academies. Goals 2000, the signature education legislation of the Clinton administration, the reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, all call for one or another kind of new emphasis on professional development.

Given these various approaches to the concept of professional development schools and the fragmentary results of the early experiments with them, it is not surprising that this volume does not speak with a single voice. No "one best conception" of professional development schools emerges in these pages, if, indeed, one ever could be developed. The book is intended primarily to bring early results of a wide variety of attempts to experiment with the general concept of a professional development school to the attention of the field. Such early results, along with the sometimes critical and always insightful analyses of the trail-blazers in this area, should help to refine the next generation of efforts. We are still in the early stages of the reform and there will necessarily be different theoretical justifications, policy analyses and emphases.

Thus, in this section John Goodlad explores the long history of school-university partnerships and what his own group, the National Network for Educational Renewal, has come to call "partner schools." These schools, intended to create a symbiosis with higher education, were designed with Goodlad's postulates in mind. They have already been in operation long enough for Goodlad to derive a number of lessons concerning school-university partnerships. These lessons of culture clash, power and resources, and shared leadership and professionalism are echoed by other writers throughout the volume.

Frank Murray, Chair of the Board of the Holmes Group, follows with design principles and criteria for professional development schools derived from the Holmes Group agenda. Murray emphasizes the interconnectedness of these criteria and the problems that ensue when the reforms are implemented piecemeal. The reader will also note that, consonant with the research universities of which it is comprised, professional development schools as conceived by the Holmes Group emphasize research and inquiry, and the preparation of advanced professionals as well as beginning teachers.

Absent from these perspectives, however, is one that emphasizes a predominant role for the professional practitioner in the schools. This kind of approach to professional development schools might be exemplified by the teacher centers in New York or the Schenley Professional Development Center in Pittsburgh or the professional development activities in Jefferson County in Kentucky or the initiatives contained in recent federal legislation such as Goals 2000 and the reauthorization of the Office of Educational

Research and Improvement and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Such a perspective tends to cast higher education in a much more junior role, providing some research-based knowledge, but clearly subservient to initiatives from the field.

It is unfortunate that we do not have any independent perspectives from the field in this volume. However, the major lesson of the book is that the two cultures of higher education and the schools do not always consort easily in implementing this new reform. And, of course, one of the features of the culture of higher education is that professors do write, while that feature is still largely absent from the culture of school practitioners. Consequently, the voices of practitioners in this volume are almost always mediated through and with the voices of those in higher education. Perhaps as the general idea of professional development schools continues to develop, we will hear more and more from practitioners who express their own unique perspectives on this reform. In this volume, however, the focus is on partnerships between the schools and higher education.

The selections in this volume, then, emphasize that professional development schools are works in progress. However, despite the multiple perspectives exemplified in this volume and the fragmentary nature of the results thus far, several themes do emerge. First and foremost is the theme of culture clashes between higher education, and how it sees professional development schools, and the field, and how it sees professional development schools. These clashes are central. When they are dealt with well, they are a key to successful experiments. When they are dealt with badly, they are often the major reason for the failure of the experiment. The clashes range from the different kinds of organizations represented by the schools and the academy through the different day to day interests and objectives of the individual participants to fundamental questions of power. Whose innovation is a professional development school, anyway? Part II of the book is devoted to these culture clashes.

Although there are inevitable culture clashes, when the differing ways of approaching the world are rubbed up against each other in professional development schools, these clashes sometimes result in culture changes in both organizations. These culture changes are often still at the margins, but they do hint at how schools and colleges and universities might begin to look very different as the participants engage each other around the themes of inquiry, joint preparation of education professionals, and continuing professional development in which practitioners have more responsibilities for pre-service education and professors are more closely connected to ongoing professional development in the schools. A new vision of the professionalization of education begins to emerge from these initial sketches of culture change that are explored in Part III.

Early discussions of professional development schools tended to focus rather narrowly on teacher education and collaboration between individual schools and individual institutions of higher education. As the reform has taken root, the concept has broadened to include the preparation of a whole range of educational professionals. Furthermore, the problems of establishing a professional development school in different kinds of contexts have become more apparent, while, at the same time, the potential of the idea as a policy initiative has attracted the attention of state and federal policymakers. A variety of ways of extending the concept of a professional development school are discussed in Part IV.

Although initially very persuasive as a reform strategy, professional development schools have drawn a number of critics as well. Are they just another innovation that sounds good in theory but that cannot be implemented? Is the view of professionalism and partnership implicit in the idea of professional development schools one that simply provides technical, hyper-rationalized solutions to our educational problems, leaving the fundamentally unequal power relationships unchanged? What about the equity agenda in educational reform? Will professional development schools help or hinder the efforts of minorities and women to obtain more and better educational opportunities? These questions are raised in a penetrating way in Part V.

Finally, it has become increasingly apparent that the applied social science style of scholarship that is so typical of traditional educational research is by no means the only, or even the most important, style of inquiry for professional development schools. Theoreticians tend to look for general laws. Practitioners, however, are interested in what they ought to do in particular cases. Unfortunately, behavioral research has not yielded general laws with anything even approaching the specificity required by practitioners to make their individual, context-bound decisions. In Part VI a new paradigm of behavioral research is sketched that gives promise of better matching the tools of inquiry to the demands of the field.

A professional development school is a new kind of organization, its outlines only beginning to emerge from the early experiments. Despite the problems detailed in these chapters, it is, nevertheless, one of the educational reforms that gives most promise of bringing about major systemic changes in the whole educational system, as research, development, implementation, and the preparation of future practitioners are all conceived as linked and integrated activities in a professional development school.