

February 1996

## Education Policy Analysis Archives 04/02

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# Education Policy Analysis Archives

Volume 4 Number 2

February 17, 1996

ISSN 1068-2341

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A peer-reviewed scholarly electronic journal.

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Arizona State University, Tempe AZ 85287-2411

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## **Staff Development Policy: Fuzzy Choices in an Imperfect Market**

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**Abstract:** It is argued here that staff development in the public elementary and secondary schools of the United States is misguided in both policy and practice. In its current form it represents an imperfect consumer market in which "proof of purchase" substitutes for investment in either school improvement or individual development. A policy model based on investment in school improvement is shown, in which different assumptions about how to improve schools are linked to different alternatives for the design and implementation of staff development. These are argued to be based on an investment rather than consumption model.

Public policy about staff development for teachers is confused by both lack of clear purpose and by unsatisfactory decision criteria. Lanier and Little (1986) concluded that "staff development has not generally been the product of coherent policy, nor has it been systematically integrated with institutional priorities for curriculum and instructional improvement" (p. 562).

Consequently, policy makers have little opportunity to assess either costs or benefits of what is a large public investment. Nonetheless they continue to view staff development-sometimes called continuing education, in-service training, or professional development-as a basic tool for changing teacher behaviors, and therefore schools. The view may be misplaced or wrong-headed but it prevails.

But fundamental policy choices exist. If they were made apparent they might lead to modifications in public policy decisions about investment in staff development. Mitchell (1986), for example, argued if school leaders believe that improving individual skill or motivation among teachers is more likely to improve performance than close supervision, staff development may be

a good school improvement strategy. Further, when leadership assumes that the average level of teacher performance is shaped more by cultural beliefs and subjective feelings than by objective work conditions (like class size or textbook quality) staff development may become a favored tactic.

Although current staff development policy is muddled at best, and out of control at worst, policy makers continue to assert the value of the enterprise. Almost all states in the United States require some form of continuing education for teachers. The major national reports on teacher reform, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (Holmes Group, 1986) and *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie, 1986), emphasize the need for teachers to continue to learn. Virtually every school district in the country provides some form of staff development for teachers. Salary schedules, merit pay schemes, and career ladders throughout the country reward teachers for participation in staff development.

## **TEACHER MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE**

But why would teachers bother to participate? At least four motives underlie teacher decisions to do so. One is salary enhancement. Participation pays off. Automatic salary raises often accrue quickly, and almost always eventually. Eligibility to compete for merit pay or to climb a career ladder are often tied to "demonstrated commitment to personal and professional development" (read participation in staff development). Another motive is certificate maintenance. State policy makers assume, whether rightly or wrongly, that periodic retooling is desirable and that continuing in the occupation should be dependent on it. A third motive is career mobility. Teachers take courses and degrees and participate in workshops to build resumes. Having done so, they attempt to leave education for other occupations or to pursue other careers within education, administration being the notable example.

None of these three motives, in itself, necessarily leads to better performance. Sometimes participation will do so, but nothing exists in the system to ensure, or perhaps even encourage, it. If a teacher's skills improve, and if the enhanced skill can be shown to result in higher levels of student performance, or any other measure of school output, then policy assumptions have been satisfied. But on the face of it, the evidence is missing that staff development, as currently arranged, can produce these links.

Teachers talk about the fourth motive, but in vague terms. Almost always the language is of gaining new skills/knowledge to enhance classroom performance. The motive is both noble, and appropriate, from a public policy perspective. The problem, as will be argued, is that the chances of policy-appropriate motive connecting to available, timely, and intellectually honest sources are little more than accidental.

## **A SHORT EXCURSION INTO COST**

Although computing the costs of all of this activity is beyond the scope of this paper, a review of the sources of cost may be instructive. The costs are both direct and indirect. Direct costs accrue as a result of direct payment to service providers. State-level costs occur when the state education agency (1) provides direct staff development assistance, (2) funds project-related efforts by local education agencies or by private providers, or (3) processes advanced certification requests. Every state in the country employs department of education specialists who provide direct service to school districts, and each state has officials who process information about teacher progress toward this or that advanced certificate. County offices of education (or some other intermediate

unit) often provide direct services which parallel or supplement those of the state education agency.

Local education agencies also incur direct costs. Smaller costs manifest in one or two days a year set aside as "in-service days." A higher level of cost is incurred when a local education agency decides to stress a particular theme. In this scenario, a private consultant (or district employee) provides a series of workshops and other training experiences. Perhaps the greatest direct expenditure of local funds attaches to general school improvement efforts, in which teachers are instructed in techniques, planning, curriculum development, and a host of other topics associated with a general model of school change.

Additional direct costs are incurred when substitute teachers must be hired to replace teachers who are attending staff development activities. Although much staff development takes place before and after regular school hours, sufficient activity occurs during the work day that this cost is noticeable. A final direct cost is that borne by teachers. As they advance in certification or obtain advanced degrees, teachers incur out-of-pocket expenses for college and university course work. Although the costs of such courses are recovered manyfold (given contemporary salary schedules), teachers nonetheless incur them.

The most expensive indirect cost of staff development rests with typical school district compensation systems. Under these, teachers get automatic pay raises for completing courses and workshops offered by whatever agencies are recognized by the school district. A related indirect cost is that public subsidies are provided for many of the providers. Public universities and colleges may enjoy subsidies of 30 percent or more of the true direct costs of instruction. Presumably, independent colleges and universities show profit, but even they receive public subsidy through the use of school-district facilities or by hiring full-time employees of local school districts and paying them modest wages.

Although beyond the scope of this work to establish, the total cost of all of this is not trivial. Little (1988) estimated that in 1986-87 staff development costs (direct and indirect) in California were about \$368 million, or about \$1700 per certified staff member. This figure is consistent with that reported by Miller, Lord and Dorney (1994), who estimated costs between \$1700 and \$3500 per teacher in four school districts. THE PUBLIC INTEREST Although public interest in staff development is long-standing, shifts of focus and authority have been common, reflecting, perhaps, a continuing uncertainty over purpose, and discomfort about quality.

Two general policy goals have been associated with staff development in this century; general upgrading of teacher skills and preparing teachers to accomplish new tasks (Stout and Wigand 1982). The locus of policy interest has shifted from the states and state interests in insisting that teachers be college graduates, to the federal government, and back to an alliance between state and local policy makers. Federal interest was at its peak during the years from about 1956 to about 1975, during which time staff development was used as a mechanism to produce a general reformation of America's schools. Better curricula and better personnel were thought to be much needed and to be possible through federal intervention in training. Now state and local policy makers have received and responded to the mandate to recapture excellence and are using staff development in a host of ways. At the core of these efforts is a belief that staff development can produce school improvement.

Over the past sixty or so years, policy about staff development has not been guided by a single consistent purpose. Row and column salary schedules have been used to improve the teaching force in a general way. Some targeted efforts have been implemented in response to changes in

federal policy directions, and periodic efforts have been made to link staff development to systematic school reform efforts. But, overall, these efforts have been without general direction and the coordination required to achieve some clear purpose.

## **THE MARKET SYSTEM FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The lack of policy focus in staff development is confounded by the nature of the market system through which it is provided. The multiple motives of teachers to participate have been described and the assertion made that only one of the four (the most difficult to track) has a clear potential link to improving school performance. In addition, the system of providing staff development is not unlike a giant academic bazaar. Colleges and universities compete fiercely for clients. In metropolitan areas of any size, tens of colleges and universities may be offering courses with the same title at the same time. Thousands of other providers crowd the marketplace as well. Local education agencies, county and state education agencies, private consultants, publishers and manufacturers of instructional materials, and purveyors of all sorts of answers to education concerns and problems set up their stalls and attempt to attract paying customers. This market is largely unregulated with respect to quality, though it is regulated in part with respect to form. The absence of quality controls is a result of both the absence of a clearly understood purpose and the motive systems that induce teachers to participate.

States have attempted to address the question of quality and return on state subsidy by regulating processes and procedures such as the number of required contact hours for courses or mandating that examinations be given in them. Some states have, from time to time, mandated content, particularly in response to a hot curricular issue. In other states, state agency employees have entered the marketplace as competitors. While these actions have encumbered and complicated the marketplace, they are misplaced because they are based on a misunderstanding of the operating market mechanism.

Staff development is a consumer market, albeit an imperfect one. In a true consumer market quality derives from consumer expectations of benefit and subsequent consumer choice. Bad products are driven out by consumer disinterest because the product is expected to produce utility for the purchaser. Products which do not are not purchased. In the staff development market, however, the inherent utility of a course or activity is irrelevant. The utility does not lie in the experience, but in evidence that the experience has been purchased. The consumer market analog is the "proof of purchase" which can be redeemed for a rebate or premium. In the case of staff development the "proof of purchase" is a transcript showing course completion, or a degree, or a certificate of attendance. The "proof of purchase" is traded for utility. Consequently, quality of the experience is easily sacrificed by participants for convenience or ease of access or free parking or a host of other considerations. Three of the motives to participate (salary enhancement, certificate maintenance, career mobility) are satisfied by showing sufficient numbers of proofs of purchase. At the point of "cashing in," proofs of purchase from one experience or course or institution are as good as those from any other.

The market then is a high volume, high cost, consumer driven one in which utility is disconnected to product and current regulatory attempts are misplaced because they do not affect the primary currency.

## **APPARENT CONSEQUENCES OF THE CURRENT MODEL**

Teachers in large numbers continue to participate in staff development, and providers have

multiplied as creative people continue to develop new delivery systems. Yet research evidence continues to be elusive, with no demonstrated link between teacher performance and attainment of advanced courses (Glasman and Biniaminov, 1981). School quality is not predicted by the numbers of teachers with advanced preparation. Sustained effort to use staff development in the context of general school reform has been lacking. As Guskey (1986, p.5) put it, "Nearly every major work on the topic of staff development has emphasized the failings of these efforts." Stallings and Krasavage (1986) argue that even highly directed training in specific instructional skills conducted over a period of several years did not result in sustained changes in teaching behaviors. Slavin (1989) placed the ineffectiveness of staff development in the larger context of fads in education. Fenstermacher and Berliner (1985) have written about the lack of evaluation models for understanding the effectiveness of staff development, and have proposed a way to begin to do so. Finally, data from the *METROPOLITAN LIFE SURVEY OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER* (1986) indicate that about 75 percent of teachers wished to influence the design and conduct of staff development programs, but only about 30 percent felt that they did so. A recent summary of staff development says that it is an "enterprise that is fragmented, not frequently engaged in on a continuing basis by practitioners, not regarded very highly as it is practiced, and rarely assessed in terms of teacher behavior and student learning outcomes." (Howey and Vaughn cited in Guskey, 1986, p.5)

It is quite difficult to imagine what kind of evidence would address the general question of the level of success of staff development efforts in the United States. At the most abstract level perhaps staff development has been successful. Over the years teachers have been able to adapt technique and curricula to changes in policy mandates. If schools have changed at all in fifty years, one must admit the possibility that staff development has contributed to these changes. In addition, policy makers must see some benefit in staff development because it continues to receive funding, and policy makers continue to worry about its content, quality, and form.

At more concrete levels, the evidence is much less certain. Because staff development is so pervasive, no large-scale studies of its effects have been done. The assessments of Teacher Corps and the Teacher Centers did not prove compelling enough to sustain them. Cuban (1984) argued that "... over nearly a century, the data show striking convergence in outlining a stable core of teacher-centered instructional activities in the elementary school and, in high school classrooms, a remarkably pure and durable version of the same set of activities." (p.238)

Aside from the effect of staff development efforts, their quality is a major issue. Shoddy work is tolerated perhaps because teachers have come to expect little from staff development, the "proofs of purchase" continue to be available and no professional standards are available to assess the activity. The system is so diffuse that word-of-mouth assessments may or may not affect subsequent provider behavior. Often enough, evaluation is conducted against teacher perceptions of usefulness or likability, but almost never against a standard having to do with school improvement. Finally, it is probably fair to say that entertaining presentations on "hot" topics get far better marks from teachers than the content or consequence would justify. The profession seems to have agreed tacitly that since staff development is not to be taken seriously anyway, great variations in quality are tolerable.

A second serious problem has to do with quantity. No evidence exists to allow a sensible policy decision about the amount of staff development needed to accomplish any given purpose. This is so in part because activity and purpose are so seldom connected. Private providers charge hourly rates, so the amount of staff development is a function of a district's willingness to spend. The provider simply matches the quantity of the service to the contract price. Universities and colleges operate on the basis of credit hours, with course material tailored to fill up the number of

contact hours required to satisfy a definition of a credit hour. No standards exist to help define how much a person might expect to learn in a one or three credit hour course. The matter rests almost entirely with the faculty member teaching the course.

A third problem is one of distribution. Teachers in urban areas have choices and exposures that teachers in remote areas lack. Because staff development delivery is labor intensive, teachers in remote areas must often travel great distances, rely on local talent, or engage with a variety of "non-traditional" delivery systems.

Despite research of varying focus and quality, including perhaps the largest single effort to assess results (Little et al., 1988), staff development efforts continue and expand based on the assumption of benefit to the public. The system rumbles on, unchecked and effectively unexamined.

## **POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

If the central argument of this article is sound--viz., that current models of staff development neither deliver, nor promise to deliver, predictable increases in school quality-- some obvious policy alternatives can be examined. The first, of course, is to do nothing. Powerful vested interests would support the option. Row and column salary schedules are quite attractive to teacher associations. Movement across and down is relatively painless, with staff development providing easy mechanisms for enhancing life-time earnings. Providers of all sorts benefit in many ways. New ideas, for good or naught, do get disseminated. Participants may benefit in other than economic ways. Thus, in the absence of documented harm, and with undocumented expenditures, the political cost of making major changes may be too high.

A second option would be to abandon the basic assumption that staff development makes any difference to anyone, and get out of the business with public funds. The elimination of public funding for staff development might free up substantial dollars for other efforts to increase student performance. But this option is as unattractive as the first is attractive, and for the same reasons. Substantial numbers of individuals and groups benefit from the current system. Consequently, it is an unlikely choice.

A third option is for state and local education agencies to develop policies which increase the possibilities for successful staff development. To do so, however, requires that policy decisions be informed by an understanding of the alternative forms that such programs can take and how these are related to adopted goals. Much in a prescriptive nature has been written about successful delivery systems (Dilworth and Imig, 1995; Howey, Bents and Corrigan, 1980; McKenzie 1980; Academy for Educational Development, 1985; Hall, 1986; Fielding and Schalock, 1985).

However, two prior considerations modify the structure of a staff development system; the content of the training to be provided and the methods of program delivery.

### *Content*

In content, staff development programs provide some combination of technical and interpersonal or organizational skills. Technical skills include subject matter expertness and pedagogical techniques along with such ancillary bodies of knowledge as child development, student assessment, and classroom management. These skills, critical in the development and effective implementation of instruction, inform the selection of materials, modification of instruction to

meet the needs of diverse student groups, identification of alternative learning experiences, adaptation of lesson plans to changing classroom contexts, and so on. They significantly affect day-to-day classroom operations (Mitchell, Ortiz and Mitchell, 1983). Although colleges and universities are expected to develop these skills in preparation programs, beginning teachers cannot be expected to have mastered them, as Berliner (1986) has shown. Staff development, thus, may have a legitimate role to play in continued skill development.

Beyond the inculcation of improved craft skills, staff development programs might help teachers understand and use organizational skills needed to work effectively with other adults. These skills include learning to participate in decision-making groups, to assess and plan for overall school improvement, and to interact with groups of parents. Put more generally, these are the skills required to work as colleagues with other adults in a professional setting (Blankenship, 1977). Modern schools are not simple organizations as portrayed in the folklore of American education.

While much of the work of schools continues to be done in a setting where one teacher works with small groups of students on simple and standardized lessons, this image obscures as much as it reveals. Schools are complex social enterprises filled with different roles for students and teachers. Strong and frequently divergent points of view shape the behavior of professional educators at all levels. Moreover, differences in community values and social systems subject the schools to competing interests.

The complex social order of the modern school creates even more need to master interpersonal or organizational skills. Mentoring or coaching, for example, requires a set of skills that teachers rarely develop during their initial preparation. Mentors must be able to assess the behavior of a colleague, counsel with the person and provide suggestions for improvement while, at the same time, retaining a peer relationship. The introduction of school- site councils requires that teachers learn an array of group process skills. Once again, these are not skills which routinely appear in preparation programs.

### *Delivery*

In addition to emphasizing different types of training content, staff development programs differ significantly in form. From a policy perspective, the most important factor in the form of delivery is whether training opportunities are directed to individual teachers or to groups of teachers with common work responsibilities. The first approach is more common, used when the goal is to improve individual performance by allowing teachers to identify their own needs and preferences and to select training opportunities without reference to others in the same school organization. This is the modal form of delivery in the current model.

The alternative, the work-group approach, has grown more popular in recent years. Here the main goal is to strengthen institutional capacity by encouraging teachers to think of staff development as an integral part of an overall school or district improvement program. It is usually delivered in the form of workshops or seminars focused on school site, grade-level, or subject matter problems that require coordinated responses from both teachers and administrators.

### *Content/Delivery Models*

In combination, the content and delivery variables define four models of staff development for teachers. As shown in Table 1, these four models define the parameters of a system.



**Table 1**  
**Models of Staff Development**

<b>FOCUS OF DELIVERY</b>			
		<b>Individual</b>	<b>Work Group</b>
<b>Pedagogy/Instruction</b>		<b>Instructional Enhancement</b>	<b>Program Development</b>
<b>CONTENT</b>			
<b>Organization Leadership</b>		<b>Professional Leadership</b>	<b>School Improvement</b>

Instructional enhancement is the traditional mode, and is served by staff development programs that combine technical skill development with a focus on delivering services to individual teachers. Skills such as new instruction methods, classroom management, diagnosis of student learning problems, motivation techniques and the use of curricular materials are typically taught in this way.

The lower left cell describes staff development designed to enhance professional leadership. The content of training shifts from technical to organizational skills, although the focus continues to be on individuals. Department heads, mentor teachers, team leaders and master teachers are obvious participants. Each needs to know how to function effectively with other adults and to operate within complex social roles that are not ordinarily contemplated, much less developed, during preparation or in early career.

Improved functioning for groups of teachers working on program development tasks is the focus of activity in the upper right cell. It is one thing for a single teacher to plan lessons for a year, but quite another to establish the scope and sequence of science or mathematics instruction for a particular grade level in an entire school. Teachers must learn high levels of technical skills, not generally applicable in individual classrooms. Textbook assessment, curriculum alignment, program evaluation, and student assessment models are examples of these sets of skills. Their application is conditioned by the context of school and district-level decisions regarding emphases and directions. As decisions of the group affect its various members, teachers participate as members of work groups rather than as individuals.

The activity represented in the lower right cell has as focus overall school improvement. In order to make schools more robust learning places teachers combine their personal skills with organizational processes that can only be acquired and exercised in a work-group setting. Even the best teachers will be less than optimally effective if they succumb to intra-faculty squabbles over teaching methods, coordination and cooperation, or school directions. This cell represents much of what is required to bring about collaborative, school-based, change. Taken together, the processes of genuine change in a school are quite involved (Dillon-Peterson 1981) and require sophisticated interaction skills.

The four types of staff development are available to policy makers. But because these models are designed to accomplish different ends, the links to policy objectives need to be made clear.

## **EVIDENT POLICY CHOICES**

Policy choices are statements of value. As such they rest on both desired ends and on assumptions about the relationships between ends and means (Marshall et al., 1985). In the absence of reliable data about what really works to make schools better, policy makers operate from what they believe will work or from ideas which they believe will satisfy their own self interests. The choice of staff development models, in turn, rests on those beliefs, and each staff development model has behind it a different assumption about how to reform schools. It makes sense for policy makers to be clear about their assumptions concerning school reform, because the choice of staff development emphases can be made consistent with them.

If policy makers believe that the primary tool for improving education is to hold teachers strictly accountable for performance, then the Instructional Enhancement model of staff development is appropriate. This is so because teacher accountability policies make the logical, but narrow, assumption that the best way to make better schools is to make better teachers. This is to be accomplished by tougher performance evaluation standards and, sometimes, by linking performance to compensation. Doing so might encourage teachers to look beyond the "proof of purchase" utility of staff development programs and to concentrate on experiences that they thought would increase the probability that training would improve chances for positive evaluation or increased compensation.

If policy makers believe that the key to school improvement lies with creating new teacher work roles, the Professional Leadership model of staff development is preferred. This policy strategy assumes that overall school improvement will result if teachers accept more differentiated job responsibilities and make unique contributions to the instructional program. In effect, this strategy attempts to increase the general density of instructional leadership in a school.

If policy makers believe that professionalizing teaching is a precursor to school improvement then the staff development strategy of choice should be that of Program Development. The key assumption of this policy strategy is that a professionalized workforce in the schools will find more effective ways of cooperation and collaboration in school program design and implementation. Professionalization, the argument goes, means that teachers will become intimately involved in the design and assessment of programs. As a result, they will accept more responsibility for the quality of their implementation and will work closely with their colleagues to insure that all students are given appropriate opportunities to learn. Staff development is concentrated on technical aspects of the instructional process not ordinarily exposed to teacher control.

Finally, if policy makers believe that improving education is more likely if schools are restructured, the staff development strategy of School Improvement may be attractive. The intent of the strategy is to transform schools into cooperative learning communities in which student needs become paramount by altering decision-making procedures, organization structures, and the distribution of authority and responsibility. The needs of the school, as identified by teachers, students, parents and local administrators determine the scope and nature of the staff development work undertaken. In this environment, staff development is a continuous and central element of life-not a special set of programs or activities.

As argued, the choice of staff development model can and ought to be linked to beliefs about

central strategies for school reform. Depending on assumptions policy makers make about what will work, staff development models will vary. It is not clear which, if any, of these is most successful, but it is clear that each is designed to accomplish different ends. If policy makers mix ends and means, as they do now, the results are unlikely to be different from the current muddle in which staff development is provided.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT MARKETPLACE**

So far I have argued that current staff development policy and implementation is flawed on two counts; little deliberate connection is made between the presumed purposes of staff development and the various means by which it is carried out, and the marketplace for staff development is an imperfect consumer market in which "proofs of purchase" can substitute for utility. I have argued as well that it is possible to articulate four distinct models of staff development, each anchored in a distinct set of assumptions about how to improve schools. In the next section I explore how each of the four school improvement strategies, and its associated staff development model, has a potential effect on the marketplace for staff development. No claim can be made that these consequences are likely, since a prior claim was made that "doing nothing" is the likely policy choice. But they are interesting speculations.

### *Instructional Enhancement Models*

The accountability strategies, so prevalent in recent reform efforts, may already have begun to shift the market system away from open choice and high levels of teacher discretion toward authoritative definitions of required technical skills. Generally accepted standards of good practice are being incorporated into standards for staff training and evaluation in many states, as are the knowledge and experience seen as the basis for their mastery. The most likely consequence is that the variety of staff development programs and activities will be reduced, sharpening the focus and intellectual definitions of teaching. Publication of TOWARD HIGH AND RIGOROUS STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1989), and subsequent assessment of individuals by the Board is an obvious first step toward establishing uniform standards of teacher performance.

In the long run, one can hope that teaching will become a more rigorous field of study. Under accountability pressure, teachers might be expected to seek high quality staff development programs more explicitly linked to the skills required for positive appraisal, salary advances and job retention. As the Carnegie Task Force (1986) put it, there is "no reason to perpetuate a system of continuing education that determines teacher compensation on the basis of credits earned after becoming a teacher. Compensation should be based on proven competence, not time in the chair" (p.77).

Carefully developed accountability policies might be expected to have a second important effect on the staff development delivery system. By establishing performance-based criteria for certification and recertification, accountability policies encourage the development of richer and more comprehensive teacher assessment practices. In addition to standardized tests of pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge, recent accountability proposals include requirements that teachers prepare a work portfolio containing such artifacts of competence as lesson plans, teacher-made tests, instructional materials, or videotapes of teaching. Staff development which cannot, in some demonstrable way, contribute to a richer portfolio might become unattractive to potential consumers.

One possible result will be new staff development vendors. Private coaching schools aimed at

facilitating the acquisition of needed knowledge and skills would have a natural market if the financial rewards approached the rewards available in other fields. Publicly supported colleges and universities might not compete vigorously in this market. Prestige law schools and private cram schools exist side by side. If repeated in education, university based schools of education might concentrate on pedagogical theory and research, leaving specialized skill development to other vendors.

### *Professional Leadership Models*

These strategies could lead to greater specialization in the delivery of staff development services. To the extent that differentiated staffing in schools becomes a reality, programs will become available to support mobility into various specialized roles within the school. Training for mentor teachers, peer coaches, curriculum developers, department chairs and other new roles could follow the well-developed pattern of specialized training for school counselors, reading specialists, and school administrators.

Training in the new roles of teacher leadership is likely to be more on-the-job than otherwise, because such jobs are likely to be filled by persons who are chosen by their peers. Colleges, universities and private vendors will undoubtedly develop packages of short-term training which incorporate specific skill sets. The market is likely to be segmented and the purchasers are more likely to be districts than individuals.

### *Program Development Models*

State policy strategies supporting professionalization can be expected to have a different effect on the staff development market system. The responsibility for program development, implicit in these models, will rest in large part with groups of teachers working together. It is at least possible that individual teachers will become expert in certain areas and will be able to coach their colleagues. Within schools and school districts we may see an increasing "in-house" capacity for staff development and the adoption of locally designed "trainer of trainers" models. Outsiders might be brought in for purposes of helping design staff development systems, but the direct services may well be provided by local talent. In addition, state department of education employees can serve as useful technical assistance providers. The net effect of this may be to reduce course taking by teachers and to increase on the job training provided by school district employees.

### *School Improvement Models*

The fourth general model can be expected to have the most profound effect on staff development marketing. In order to support restructuring, staff development activities have to be placed in the hands of local school or district leaders, and staff training has to be merged with school program and policy development so that skill enhancement is parallel to shifting responsibilities of staff.

Within this framework, control over staff development resources needs to be linked to overall school leadership responsibility. Whether placed in the hands of teachers or administrators, leadership for school restructuring will need to combine new organizational designs with new systems of resource and authority allocation. In order for redesigned schools to work, staff development resources will have to be focused directly on helping all members of the organization make the transition and become contributors within the new structural framework. Staff development, therefore, will have to give up its emphasis on service to individuals and become an integral part of organizational planning and development.

## FROM A CONSUMPTION TO AN INVESTMENT MODEL

The current state of staff development is in disarray and driven by undesirable market conditions. By connecting staff development to school improvement, the staff development market can be changed from a largely unregulated consumer market to one in which quality is demanded by persons who view staff development as an investment decision rather than a consumption decision. In this model, return on investment becomes the decision criterion, and the rate of return will be indicated by the level of progress of school improvement. Such a model will force higher quality experiences.

If return on investment were to become the primary decision criterion, two consequences become apparent. The first consequence would be substantial reduction in the cafeteria-like offerings now in the market and possibly an end to the proliferation of "courses" offered by colleges and universities, county offices of education, state departments of education and school districts. Without the sure return on investment provided by the proof of purchase, teachers might simply stop accumulating credits. (This assumes, of course, that policy makers have sufficient motive to abandon current row and column salary schedules.) Aside from some dislocations in the workforce of providers, the result might be a substantial reduction in public subsidy.

In addition, relieved of pressures to offer courses and workshops for the convenience of the "credit collectors," universities and colleges might give serious attention to constructing degree programs of rigor and intellectual integrity. Teachers might then choose to take advanced degrees because of clear evidence that doing so would improve their work performance or their intellectual quality of life. They might also demand much higher levels of performance by faculty since the teachers would have to risk the cost of tuition and fees against no clear return on investment.

The second consequence may be a shift in the structure of providers, with the dominance of colleges and universities giving way to entrepreneurs. New providers and new technologies for delivery could develop. College and university faculty in education might begin to differentiate the unique roles of university study, and a degree in education may come to have some common meaning as staff development activity is assumed by other agencies. This might mean a reduction in the size of education faculties, though normal attrition would offset any sudden dislocations.

An investment market in which anticipated return would drive up the quality of offerings and would be linked to strategic policy choices about school reform leaves unanswered the questions of "Who invests?" and "Who benefits?" At least two general answers are available. The first is that the primary beneficiary is the teacher, and thus the teacher should make the major investment. The argument makes most sense if accountability models or leadership development models are the strategies of choice for school improvement. Because the teacher will benefit directly by job retention, higher pay, or increased job responsibility, the teacher should pay for the skills, as private practice professionals do.

But this argument has two flaws. The first is that the level of return on investment is quite low for teachers. A base salary in the \$20,000-\$30,000 range is not comparable to the salaries of private practice professionals. In addition, publicly financed institutions typically cap the salaries of even the highest performing individuals. Thus, the decision by a teacher to invest is bounded by narrowly defined returns.

The second flaw is that teachers work in public bureaucracies and do not have full discretion to practice their craft. They are expected to accept institutional goals and constraints. Consequently

the returns to them are modified by institutional demands and interventions. Newly acquired skills may not be used if they conflict with institutional policies, procedures, and cultures.

The difficulties with placing the decision to invest with the teacher suggest that school district officials should make major investment decisions. Currently, teachers make the major consumption decisions and the cost of those decisions are passed through to the public, with no apparent relationship to improvement. Were school districts to take seriously the investment model, decisions about participants, content, cost, delivery and the rest would be made only after consideration of the underlying question of expected return. Then justification for public subsidy could be stated and debated. At present the debate over return is not held because market mechanisms deflect such questions.

School districts can decide the mix of services, identify providers, assess results, and determine, finally, the quality of available services. State and federal roles would include monitoring school district decisions and suggesting or mandating alternative strategies or providers. If teachers chose to study for degrees or to buy experiences outside those sponsored and paid for by districts, they would do so as private investors with no guarantee of return on their investments. Thus, the proof of purchase would disappear as a measure of utility.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff development has had a spotty record in American education. Most thoughtful persons will at once agree that it is a necessary activity and that it is unsatisfactory in its current form. By linking staff development to strategies for school improvement, policy makers can rethink the purposes, structures, and content of future efforts.

The current lack of focus in staff development policy derives from the disjunction of activity and purpose and the domination of an imperfect and inappropriate consumer market. It has been shown that the goals, delivery, and content of staff development can be linked differentially to strategies for school improvement. By doing so, policy-makers can change the market to one driven by investment decisions, can raise the overall quality of experiences, and build a base for clearly assessing the returns on investment.

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**Contributed Commentary on  
Volume 4 Number 2: Stout Staff Development Policy:  
*Fuzzy Choices in an Imperfect Market***

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4 November 1996

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Robert Stout brings an issue to the policy table that has been hotly debated in the past few years. Questions regarding improving the quality of our schools have been posed to educators, lawmakers and public administrators on a frequent basis. Stout sees the development of the school faculty as a major piece in the reform movement. His analysis of the current system of staff development shows why in many respects it is an obvious failure. Viewing the current system as a smorgasbord of uncertain and untested courses and workshops, Stout makes the solid point that such credit collecting is undermining the well-intended efforts of legislatures and educational policy bodies.

It is obvious that Stout addresses a key issue in American education; however, something is lacking. Good policy suggestions are offered, such as shifting to an investment model of staff development. But little is suggested that will have a long term impact on the public education field. Public administrators need to be constantly looking for ways to improve systems. Whether it is minor reform, as suggested by Stout, or systemic reform, as will be suggested in this commentary, the eyes of the professional must be on the crux of the question. In this case that crux is the professionalism of public school teachers.

Two main propositions are offered in this area to alleviate many of the problems Stout has explicated. The first is the abandonment of the Bachelors degree as the minimum required educational level for entry into the teaching profession. An idea that offers one way to remedy the problems of staff development--and one which has gained recent momentum--is the fifth-year Masters program. At present teachers are clearly rewarded with a significant raise upon completing a Masters degree. Often these degrees are actually the culmination of many years of staff development course work. As demonstrated by Stout such training is dubious at best in many cases. The standardization of the Master of Arts in Teaching or Master of Arts in Education as the entry level degree assures as much as possible a firm professional background of training for all teachers. The additional year of professional training coupled with four years of exclusive subject matter study insures a high level of quality in new teachers. Teachers who are already certified with only a Bachelors degree will be exempted from this requirement, but will soon fall behind in competitiveness with their fellow teachers.

The second proposition rises out of the establishment of the first. Current staff development programs hope to retool teachers and maintain quality in the teaching profession. By setting the requirements for entry into the teaching profession at the Masters level, professional standards can be developed. One professional career stands out as an excellent

model to follow, the legal profession. The American Bar Association in conjunction with state Bars mandates certain levels of continuing legal education to maintain licensing. The National Education Association could pursue similar objectives in conjunction with state boards of education. Such a model provides uniform and approved training to all teachers, unlike the current system with virtually no regulation. Questions of utility and efficiency are virtually absent in such a model. In addition, the pursuit of advanced degrees is basically limited to those who wish to leave the field of teaching. Doctor of Education degrees would only be pursued by those who want to step into positions of great administrative responsibility or into the college classroom, as in law where significantly small numbers pursue LL.M. and J.S.D. degrees.

The suggestions offered here only represent a small percentage of systems that could work better. Recently the Public Administration field has been turned upside down by works such as "Reinventing Government" by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler. The main message behind such works is that government often does not have the best model for the way things can be done. By looking at the private sector we can often find a way to do things differently. Given the current dissatisfaction with the quality of public education in America, a fresh approach needs to be taken. The model offered here does not purport to be the solution to all problems, it simply shows that it has worked for another profession. Perhaps now is the time to modify and implement such a model in American public education.