

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)

A Case for Professional Development Schools

Author(s): Meg Gebhard

Source: *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Research and Practice in English Language Teacher Education (Autumn, 1998), pp. 501-510

Published by: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3588120>

Accessed: 31/03/2009 15:04

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=tesol>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL) is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *TESOL Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

- Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. (1995). *Education at a glance: OECD indicators*. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Goldberg, M. F. (1997). Maintaining a focus on child development: An interview with Dr. James P. Comer. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78, 557–559.
- Kaestle, C. (1993). The awful reputation of educational research. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1), 23–31.
- Kennedy, M. M. (1997). The connection between research and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 26(7), 4–12.
- Olsen, L. (1998, April 1). Study: Schoolwide reform not easy. *Education Week*, 17, 1, 17.
- O'Neil, J. (1995). On lasting school reform: A conversation with TedSizer. *Educational Leadership*, 5(5), 4–9.
- Pinnell, G. S. (1991). Restructuring beginning reading with the reading recovery approach. *Fastback 328*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 347512)
- Richardson, V. (1994). Conducting research on practice. *Educational Researcher*, 23(5), 5–10.
- Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovation* (4th ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Sashkin, M., & Ergermeier, J. (1993). *School change models and processes. A review and synthesis of research and practice*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Slavin, R. E. (1997). Design competitions: A proposal for a new federal role in educational research and development. *Educational Researcher*, 26(1), 22–28.
- Walberg, H. J., & Greenberg, R. C. (1998). The Diogenes factor: Why it's hard to get an unbiased view of programs like "Success for All." *Education Week*, 17(30), 59, 36.
- Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., & Hyde, A. (1993). *Best practice: New standards for teaching and learning in America's schools*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

A Case for Professional Development Schools

MEG GEBHARD

University of California, Berkeley

■ In discussing the contextual, situated nature of L2 teaching, Freeman (1994) writes,

For teacher education, time and place are unexamined issues. Aside from the structural distinctions between pre- and in-service education, "front loading" persists as the dominant format in teacher education so that a single, sustained professional input early on in teachers' careers is assumed to equip recipients for a lifetime of professional work. (p. 3)

In an attempt to move away from the generic front loading, in which theoretical course work and a teaching practicum are separated in time and space and often represent competing ideologies, many institutions preparing teachers are attempting to restructure their programs to contextualize teacher education by forming partnerships with innovative

local schools. Over a decade ago, the Holmes Group (1986) developed the concept of professional development schools (PDSs) to improve the professional development of preservice and in-service teachers and thereby support the capacity of schools to implement and sustain penetrating educational reforms. PDSs differ from typical student-teaching placements in that the university actively seeks out and makes a long-term commitment to a public school. The purpose of this joint venture is to create a setting that supports the theoretical and practical aspects of learning to teach, allow expert teachers to play a larger role in the development of new teachers by acting as mentors and university adjuncts, and allow school and university educators to engage in joint research projects (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

THE CONTEXT

Theoretical Context

The theoretical rationale behind the PDS movement is rooted in the literature regarding the sociology and professionalization of teaching, which underscores the role contexts play in the development of teaching practices. Lortie's (1975) seminal study of teachers, for example, documents the eased entry, lack of career stages, isolation, low task interdependency, and weak socialization process in teachers' work, which result in their efforts being compromised by weak commitments, endemic uncertainties, and a lack of a shared technical culture (a specialized knowledge-base and set of practices).

Drawing on Lortie's (1975) work, researchers have studied the contextual factors that militate against a shared technical culture, weak commitments, and low control over membership in teachers' professionalization (Little, 1984, 1990; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). Little's work, for example, suggests that professional development initiatives are most influential when teachers' interactions are marked by high norms of collegiality (Little, 1990). That is, when teachers enter into interdependent, joint work relationships through long-term collaboration focused on understanding and improving student learning, they enhance their teaching practices, have a shared investment in student learning, and create an atmosphere of experimentation. This stands in contrast to contexts marked by high norms of privacy, in which teachers who trespass into each other's teaching spaces by asking for help or giving advice risk being perceived as incompetent or intrusive. In such contexts, beginning teachers benefit very little from working next door to gifted teachers. Moreover, in contexts marked by high norms of privacy, inappropriate and even harmful teaching practices are tolerated in relative silence.

Building on Little's (1984, 1990) work, Talbert and McLaughlin (1993, 1994) further explore the relationship between context and teacher professionalism in U.S. secondary schools. Specifically, they describe the ways in which professionalism is supported or constrained by the multiple, embedded contexts within which teachers interact. These contexts, resting within varying ideological climates, include differences in sectors (e.g., public or private schools), districts, schools, departments, and classrooms and, for many teachers, differences in their participation in professional networks (e.g., teacher associations and university affiliations). In a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative analysis of 16 high schools in two states, Talbert and McLaughlin (1994) found that more removed contexts were less consequential for teachers' professionalism than were the strength and character of the local teacher communities. They concluded that norms of teaching practices are socially negotiated within the everyday contexts of schooling. Talbert and McLaughlin note, however, as does Little (1990), that in some strong teacher communities, teachers' shared understandings can work against a service ethic. In contexts such as these, for example, teachers collectively reinforce each others' uninformed beliefs and practice, particularly in regard to recent immigrants and nonnative speakers of English.

Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1995), taking this body of work as a foundation, asked questions about ways to redesign institutional, structural arrangements in schools so that they develop the strength and character of teachers' professional communities. Based on six case studies of the implications of school restructuring for teachers' work, they developed a framework that suggests that teachers' professional communities can be supported in powerful ways. Specifically, teachers need time, communication structures, interdependent teaching roles, access to expertise, leadership, ways of inducting new members, and a climate of trust and respect.

In sum, the research on the socialization and professional development of L1 teachers offers valuable insights into new ways of conceptualizing and contextualizing L2 teacher education. Namely, a synthesis of the literature indicates that contextualized alternatives to front loading in the preparation of L2 educators, as represented by the PDS concept, can be analyzed according to the degree to which they

1. foster interdependent teaching roles,
2. provide teachers with institutional resources in the form of time and space to collaborate,
3. establish communication structures in which teachers develop a set of discourse practices for analyzing their teaching practices and student learning,

4. develop social mechanisms for the recruitment and induction of new teachers,
5. provide teachers access to technical expertise,
6. foster leadership, and
7. operate in a climate of trust and respect.

Work Context

A school in the process of becoming a PDS consistent with the above characteristics is Trent Academy, an elementary school in the Los Angeles area that formed a partnership with one of California's state universities.¹ Located in a low-income, high-crime area, Trent serves approximately 1,100 students in Grades K–6, 81% of whom are identified as limited English proficient and speak Spanish as their L1. Before 1990, Trent had a reputation as one of most dysfunctional schools in the district. Demographic changes during the late 1980s resulted in conflicts between the African American community and the incoming Latino community, conflicts that spilled over into the school. Tensions reached such a pitch that a newly hired principal was reported to have received death threats. Almost half the teaching staff, many of whom were working on emergency credentials, quit. Moreover, students' test scores ranked among the lowest in the district. The situation began to change the following year with the hiring of a second principal, Elizabeth Dang. Described as having "enough energy and drive to power a locomotive" (Wallis, 1994, p. 54), Dang brought to the position a host of talents and experiences that enabled her to act as a catalyst for school change. Important to a discussion of PDSs is that Dang, who holds a PhD in special education, was also on the faculty at nearby CSU.

Seven years later, in 1997, the school had a stable, committed staff who were capable of implementing an array of school reform initiatives in daily practices. The turnover rate was less than 1%, all staff members had their teaching credentials, and the number of teachers certified to teach in a Spanish-English bilingual program had increased by 50%. Moreover, in the spring of 1997 the school purchased a piece of property next to the school site and obtained the services of a retired architect to design a new building to serve as the CSU-Trent Teacher Training Academy, with the specific mission of improving the teaching of L2 learners with learning disabilities.

¹ The data reported here come from a larger study of school restructuring at the University of California, Berkeley, under the direction of Judith Warren Little. All names are pseudonyms. To preserve the anonymity of the school site, I use the generic *California State University* or *CSU* to refer to this university.

THE PRACTICE

The complex story behind the strides made by the principal and the teachers at Trent makes it difficult to highlight a single aspect of their reform initiative, such as their partnership with CSU. Therefore, the following description of Trent's professional development program is embedded in a broader discussion of the overall reform process. The key elements of this process include dynamic leadership, the implementation of reforms to make institutional structures more flexible, the innovative allocation of institutional resources to support teachers' work, and the creation of a discourse of possibility.

Leadership

Dang is one part educational reform analyst, one part hard-pressing entrepreneur, and one part missionary. In an interview she described her philosophy of educational renewal and talked about developing ways of supporting teachers and administrators in "dreaming bigger and moving faster" than the bulky bureaucracy in education typically allows. She also emphasized her belief that "hard work pays off." Her philosophy was put into action during her first few years at Trent. First, she improved the school campus by writing and receiving a grant to clean up the campus, doing a good deal of the "painting, scrubbing, and cleaning" herself. She maintained that "a good safe campus is easy, it's doable, it's tangible, and people see obvious results" (interview, fall 1995). Next, she instituted a form of school governance, known as site-based management, that emphasizes shared decision making by granting real authority to teachers and parents in order to harness their collective energies in changing what matters most to them. Third, she applied for and received large grants from the state (\$580,000 over 5 years), a national nonprofit organization (\$400,000 over 3 years), and a leading corporation (\$350,000 over 3 years). In discussing these efforts, she highlighted the importance of "building momentum in the organizational capacity" of the school in two ways. First, she stressed "always bringing it back to curriculum and instruction" by asking, "When I spend this dollar, how does it help kids?" Second, she emphasized the importance of being a role model. This was evident not only in her belief that "you don't ask people to do things you're not willing to do yourself" (interview, fall 1995) but also in the ways in which a number of teachers talked about being apprenticed into her leadership style by working closely with her.

Reforms and Flexible Institutional Structures

In her third year as principal, Dang, capitalizing on a piece of state legislation that would allow Trent to break free from district regulations,

negotiated contracts with the teachers' union in order to become a state-funded, quasi-independent school. This reform initiative, known as Charter School Legislation, gave Trent greater freedom in pushing what Dang called *system buttons* in education. Specifically, under site-based management, the school formed eight teacher-parent committees on which participation was mandatory. These committees had the authority to, among other things, define the curriculum; structure teaching teams; recruit, hire, and assess staff members; and provide opportunities for the professional growth of teachers.

In regard to their relationship with CSU, the school staff, through a host of projects, attempted to identify and support members of the local community who showed promise for a career in education. As a result of their work, an informal career ladder formed in which several volunteers at the school, some of whom had left professions in Latin America, became paid teaching assistants, took courses at CSU toward their teaching credentials, and accepted positions at the school. José Zurillo, for example, had been a medical doctor in Bolivia, but his medical credentials were not recognized in the U.S. To make a living, keep an eye on his children who attended Trent, and learn English, he applied to become a teacher's aide. Through the support of Dang, after a number of years he became the director of bilingual education at the school. In addition to community recruitment, Trent drew from the cadre of student teachers who do their practicum at Trent. An example of a teacher who came through this route was the special education teacher, who was a student in a course taught by Dang.

Allocation of Resources

The staff at Trent allocated institutional resources in the form of space, time, and funds to support the work of teachers. With regard to space, in addition to the proposed teacher education academy, Trent established a Teacher Resource Center equipped with a Power Macintosh computer, a laser printer, a scanner, and Internet access. With regard to time, the teachers created a schedule in which students were released from school early every Wednesday afternoon, when teachers met in their teaching teams or as a whole staff to plan curriculum and analyze student learning. On one Wednesday in particular, the entire staff participated in a workshop on the development of rubrics in the assessment of L1 and L2 writing. The workshop was led by three teachers who attended a conference sponsored by the National Writing Project²

² The National Writing Project works to improve students' writing abilities by improving the teaching and learning of writing in U.S. schools, providing professional development programs for classroom teachers, and expanding the professional roles of teachers.

and felt that the information was important enough to share with the entire staff. As part of the workshop, teachers broke into smaller team-teaching groups to develop rubrics using samples of student writing from their own classes. Later, as part of a teacher assessment protocol, teachers were evaluated on the degree to which they demonstrated the use of rubrics in their classroom practices.

In regard to funds, the 1994–1995 budget shows that the school allotted money for each teacher to have 10 paid release days for professional development. Teachers used these days in a variety of ways, including attendance at professional conferences and workshops. New teachers in particular were encouraged to use these days to observe their mentor teachers—eight teachers who exemplified Trent’s definition of teaching excellence and received stipends of \$1,500 each to support their work with novice teachers.

Discourse of Possibility

In talking with the staff members at Trent, one gets the impression of a committed staff who believe anything is possible through their collective efforts. As one first-year teacher expressed it, “If you want to make a change there is an avenue to do so . . . you can really see your ideas become action” (interview, fall 1995).

THE FIT

An analysis of the ways in which Trent’s PDS initiative fits the theoretical body of literature regarding the context of teachers’ work suggests that Trent made significant gains in developing an environment that fostered teacher professionalism. Specifically, the collective reforms at Trent cultivated a teaching faculty that have developed a shared knowledge-base and set of practices, have a strong service ethic, and have control over who enters the profession and how their practices are evaluated. Trent achieved this largely by providing teachers with institutional resources in the form of time, space, and funding, all of which resulted in new and experienced teachers alike having access to technical support in further developing their practices. Second, Trent established communication structures and fostered teacher leadership through mandatory, active participation in site-based governance committees that emphasized issues surrounding curriculum and instruction. Third, the school developed mechanisms for the recruitment and induction of new teachers from the local community who spoke the students’ L1, were knowledgeable about the students’ culture, and had a strong investment in the students’ academic success. Fourth, the teachers at Trent developed a climate of trust and respect through their diligent work on

various committees. Finally, in regard to interdependent roles, the teachers at Trent developed interdependency through their site-based committee work at the macro, school administrative level. This led to shared understandings on such difficult issues as curricular frameworks and assessment practices.

At the microlevel, however, true joint work was less visible in teacher-student-curricular interactions within classrooms. In fact, several teachers commented that, despite the gains they made professionally through their committee work, committees often pulled their focus away from their individual teaching practices and students. In describing this situation, one teacher said that after a number of years of having served on high-powered committees, such as the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, she was ready to play a smaller role on a less controversial committee so that she might redirect her attention back to her classroom (interview, fall 1995). The situation this teacher is describing may improve with the advent of a more fully developed PDS program or as the school's various reform initiatives mature.

In conclusion, what stands out in Trent's professional development program is the degree to which the school energized and sustained the professional character of its teaching staff by supporting the work of teachers on site in a contextualized, well-grounded fashion. Similar to Anderson's (1997) discussion of a TESOL-PDS, the narrative of school reform at Trent signals that true innovation in teacher education takes place not at the university in generic discussions about teaching but in the act of teaching in local contexts. This suggests that L2 teacher educators have a responsibility to identify and form partnerships with innovative schools that have the capacity to support the professional development of preservice L2 teachers. This step is crucial if teacher educators are to understand and support the work beginning teachers do, make good use of the knowledge gifted teachers have, play an active role in educational reform, and further a more grounded theoretical understanding of teaching practices and student learning.

GENERALIZABILITY

As situated in Trent Academy, the PDS initiative hinges on the unique qualities of the individuals involved and the ways in which district and state policy contexts shape their work. In this sense, a discussion of Trent's approach to teachers' professional development is intended to be not a model solution but rather an example of a well-crafted, contextually based approach to L2 teacher education. As discussed, this approach is more powerful than traditional behavioral approaches to L2 teacher education. For example, in California, one of the solutions to the shortage of ESL and bilingual teachers is the de-skilling practice of

equipping emergency credentialed teachers with do-this-every-time workbooks or mandating that L1 teachers log a specified number of hours in generic ESL methodology classes offered by districts. In contrast, the concept of a PDS, in line with a socioconstructivist perspective of development (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985), recognizes that teachers' practices are rooted in cultural, historical, and institutional settings. As such, attempts to develop a theoretical basis for understanding teacher learning or to improving teacher education in significant ways must address the context of teaching. Moreover, the current call to examine what Freeman refers to as the "time and place" of teaching is not limited to discussions of teaching in the U.S. but extends to discussions of the practices of ESL/EFL teachers in international contexts. Specifically, Duff and Uchida's (1997) report that participants teaching in a Japanese context changed their practices as a result of the "classroom and institutional culture, instructional materials, and reactions from students and colleagues" (p. 460). Further, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) advocate a *pedagogy of appropriation*, in which international ESL/EFL teachers revise their teaching methodologies to be in tune with both local, culturally specific forms of discourse and the global language needs of learners of English. Clearly, as is evident at Trent Academy, cultural and institutional contexts matter in the ways in which teachers construct and enact their teaching practices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was supported with funds from the Stuart Foundations and Hewlett Foundation.

THE AUTHOR

Meg Gebhard is a doctoral candidate at the University of California at Berkeley. Her research interests include second language acquisition in classroom settings, the professional development of second language educators, and the implications of school reform for linguistic minority students in public schools.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, P. (1997). Professional development schools: A balanced wheel makes it better for everyone. *TESOL Journal*, 7(1), 19–24.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). Developing professional development schools: Early lessons, challenge, and promise. In L. Darling Hammond (Ed.), *Professional development schools: Schools for a developing profession* (pp. 1–26). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Duff, P., & Uchida, Y. (1997). The negotiation of teachers' sociocultural identities and practices in post secondary EFL classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 451–485.
- Freeman, D. (1994). Knowing into doing: Teacher education and the problem of

- transfer. In D. C. S. Li, D. Mahoney, & J. Richards (Eds.), *Exploring second language teacher development* (pp. 1–21). Hong Kong: City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.
- Holmes Group. (1986). *Tomorrow's teachers: A report of the Holmes Group*. East Lansing, MI: Author.
- Kramsch, C., & Sullivan, P. (1996). Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 50, 199–212.
- Kruse, S., Louis, K., & Bryk, A. (1995). An emerging framework for analyzing school-based professional community. In K. Louis & S. Kruse (Eds.), *Professionalism and community: Prospective on reforming urban schools* (pp. 23–42). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Little, J. W. (1984). Seductive images and organizational realities in professional development. *Teachers College Record*, 86, 84–102.
- Little, J. W. (1990). The persistence of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations. *Teachers College Record*, 91, 509–536.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Louis, K. S., & Kruse, S. (1995). *Professionalism and community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Talbert, J., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). Understanding teaching in context. In D. Cohen, M. W. McLaughlin, & J. Talbert (Eds.), *Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice* (pp. 167–206). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Talbert, J., & McLaughlin, M. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school contexts. *American Journal of Education*, 102, 123–153.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds. & Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wallis, C. (1994, October 31). A class of their own. *Time*, 53–63.
- Wertsch, J. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

A Systemic Teacher Education Intervention: The Italian In-Service Education Program for Foreign Language Teachers

LUCILLA LOPRIORE

University of Rome, La Sapienza

■ In 1978, the in-service education project known as the Progetto Speciale Lingue Straniere (Special Project for Foreign Languages, or PSLS) was conceived to retrain Italian teachers of English, French, German, and Spanish in lower-age (11–14) and upper-age (15–18) secondary schools. The project was organised by Italy's Ministry of Education with the assistance of national cultural agencies from the U.S., France, Germany, and Spain.¹ The PSLS marked a systemic response to

¹ These agencies included the British Council (United Kingdom), the Goethe Institut (Germany), the Consejería de la Educación (Spain), the Bureau Linguistique (France), and the U.S. Information Service and the Fulbright Commission (U.S.).