Why We Must Answer the Question "What Is a Professional Development School?"

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Abstract: In this article the authors first provide a brief overview of the history and recent research pertaining to the Professional Development School movement. They then argue for the need for a more conclusive and widely accepted definition of what constitutes a PDS and what does not. This call becomes the theme for this first online publication of *School-University Partnerships*—specifically "What is a PDS?". While many in our field may assume that this question is unnecessary to answer or would restrict PDS practitioners and scholars, the authors maintain that the PDS movement is at a key moment in its evolution. It is a moment that requires us to be critical of the nature of a PDS and of its place in teaching, schools, and teacher education. This article argues that if we in the PDS field do not address these questions head on, we leave it for others, not as well positioned, to do so.

KEYWORDS: Professional Development Schools, PDSs, school-university partnerships, PDS research, PDS history, PDS definitions

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;
2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
6. An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;
7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration;
8. Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and
9. Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structure

A Brief History of Professional Development Schools

In many ways, the history of the Professional Development School (PDS) movement is not a difficult one to track. Most PDS scholars and practitioners look to the work of the Holmes Partnership—documented quite comprehensively in its trilogy of volumes published in 1986, 1990, and 1995—as providing the founding vision for PDS efforts. The National Network for Education Renewal (NNER), the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)—since merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to form the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)—and the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) have historically advocated for and been engaged with such partnerships. More recently other organizations—including the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)—have increasingly highlighted PDS structures as examples of best practice teacher education efforts.

Though the name “Professional Development School” may have risen out of the literature of teacher education reform movements in the 1980s and 1990s, the history of the PDS goes back much further. Today’s PDS, or any similarly named school-university partnership, was yesterday’s lab school, a form of school organization and K-12 and teacher learning that is generally recognized as John Dewey’s invention at the University of Chicago. Colburn (1993) explains that Dewey envisioned schools being run jointly by public schools and colleges of education and that, like today’s PDSs, faculty at these schools would share responsibility for training new teachers and conducting research.

Until the mid-1970s, many such lab schools flourished in the US. Since that time these innovative, partnership-oriented structures have largely succumbed to the criticisms of being too expensive to operate and too atypical from the “real world” of schools. Since the per-student expenditures for lab schools usually exceeded those of public schools and many of the students who attended such sites of pedagogical experimentation were the children of university faculty who did not represent the ethnic, social, or economically diverse student population of the typical public school, this critique seemed justified (Colburn, 1993). The subsequent closing of lab schools reduced the convenient, controlled settings universities desired to train teachers and conduct education-related research. It was presumed that this void could be better filled by the development of close working relationships with nearby public schools. The concept of the Professional Development School emerged shortly thereafter, and, by most counts, PDSs have steadily grown in number and complexity since.

Recent Scholarship and PDSs

Numerous scholarly and policy publications have detailed the development and expansion of the PDS movement. A growing body of literature has examined examples of PDSs and their impact on pre- and in-service teachers, PK-12 student achievement, and educator development. These documents include the *Blue Ribbon Panel Report on Clinical Teacher Preparation* (2010), a seminal publication to which many look as the definitive summary of both the inherent flaws in our teacher education systems and the potential of school-university partnerships for addressing those shortcomings.

Other texts include Goodlad and co-authors' *Education and the Making of a Democratic People* (2008); Basile's *Intellectual Capital: The Intangible Assets of Professional Development Schools* (2009), a collection of stories by the stakeholders in a PDS partnership; Darling-Hammond's *Professional Development Schools: Schools for Developing a Profession* (2005), a historical analysis of PDS partnerships across the United States; and Neapolitan and Berkeley's *Where Do We Go From Here: Issues in the Sustainability of Professional Development School Partnerships* (2006), an analytical review of PDS research and its future. We also count among the recent volumes contributing to this literature Neapolitan's *Taking Stock of Professional Development Schools: What's Needed Now* (2011), a review of the current literature and a call to action; Wong and Glass' *Prioritizing Urban Children, Teachers, and Schools through Professional Development Schools* (2009), a description of an urban PDS partnership written by the educators and researchers involved; and Zenkov and colleagues' *Professional Development Schools and Social Justice* (2013), which offers descriptions of and research into PDS structures that are oriented around an equity perspective.

This list of scholarly considerations of PDSs is, of course, incomplete. Other contributions include Clark's *Effective Professional Development Schools* (1999), a review of the roles a PDS can play in school and teacher education contexts; Guadarrama, Ramsey, and Nath's *Professional Development Schools: Advances in Community Thought and Research* (2005); and Ferrara's *Professional Development Schools: Creative Solutions for Educators* (2014), a detailed report of procedures to make PDS partnerships successful. The array of PDS research is also supplemented by a growing body of journals and other volumes, including *Professional Development Schools and Transformative Partnerships, School-University Partnerships, The Professional Educator,* and the *Research in Professional Development Schools* series.

PDS Purposes and Relevant Publications

In its foundational tomes, the Holmes Partnership articulated four primary objectives of PDSs, with emphases on the training of pre-service teachers, the achievement of PK-12 students, research on and by school and university educators on PK-12 and teacher education curricula and practices, and the professional development of all of the constituents of these partnerships (Holmes Group, 1990). Other organizations have echoed and expanded upon these purposes. NCATE contributed its own set of PDS Standards in 2001 (NCATE, 2001), and NAPDS introduced its "Nine Essentials" of a PDS in 2008 (NAPDS, 2008). While the intent of this introductory article is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the similarities and differences between what are arguably these seminal sets of PDS ends, it is reasonable to say that there is significantly more overlap than disagreement amongst these organizations' PDS principles.

Recent and historical discussions of alternative models of teacher education, teacher leadership, and collaborative and teacher-driven professional development activities have been documented as outgrowths of the PDS and the "Professional Learning Communities" (PLCs) movements. Mullen's *Handbook of Leadership and Professional Learning Communities* (2009), Teitel's *The Professional Development Schools Handbook* (2003), and Pine's *Teacher Action Research: Building Knowledge Democracies* (2009) have considered how PDSs and PLCs might best support these leadership practices and impact P-12 student learning. And Craig and Deretchin's *Imagining a Renaissance in Teacher Education* (2008) engages in a broader discussion of teacher education principles and practices, with clear connections to PDS-related structures and ideals.

In addition, numerous recent texts have influenced thinkers and practitioners in the field of teacher education. These include Cochran-Smith and Zeichner's *Studying Teacher Education* (2005), a comprehensive volume synthesizing the research on teacher education, and Johnston-Parson's *Dialogue and Difference in a Teacher Education Program* (2012), an account of a longitudinal case study at a PDS. Bohan and Many's *A Clinical Teacher Education* (2011), which offers a close-up of urban PDS systems, and Darling-Hammond's *Powerful Teacher Education* (2006), an in-depth description of teacher education programs considered to be successful, are also key volumes in this growing bank of studies and descriptions.

Research literature also makes—and increasingly supports—a variety of claims about the impact of PDSs. Much of the initial PDS research focused on the process of creating a PDS, the lessons learned when working with a PDS, how the PDS setting improved clinical experiences for teacher education candidates, and anecdotal accounts of collaboration and professional development in particular PDSs. More recent research reports illustrate how PDSs champion collaboration within and across schools and universities and help future teachers to integrate the theories they encounter in their university teacher education courses into their developing school-based pedagogies (Cozza, 2010; Henry, Tryjankowski, Dicamillo, & Bailey, 2010; Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007). Several studies have documented how PDS-based teacher preparation is superior to teacher training that occurs in non-PDS settings (Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; Castle, Rockwood, & Tortorra, 2008; Reynolds, Steven, & Rakow, 2002), particularly in terms of new teacher induction, teacher hiring, and retention in traditionally hard-to-staff schools (Fleener & Dahm, 2007; Latham & Vogt, 2007).

A review of the back issues of *SUP* from the past four years further illuminates the emphasis PDSs and stakeholders place on collaboration and partnership. Research articles in *SUP* from 2012 to the present have addressed problems of resources available for collaboration; the roles of teacher candidates, teacher leaders, and university personnel; and the benefits to all parties. Contributors to this journal have also explored themes of social justice and multiculturalism as they relate to PDSs, as well as the ways PDSs across the country have better prepared teacher candidates to serve in urban school districts. These issues detail the impacts a PDS can have on all constituents in education, from principals to students, and show that while PDSs may vary, the underlying goals and characteristics of these partnerships tend to be more similar than different.

Why We Need a Common Definition of PDS—*Now*

While the PDS movement is now in its fourth decade and a growing number and range of constituencies look to Professional Development School principles and structures as essential elements of teacher education, educator development, professionalization, PK-12 student achievement, and even social justice education (Cantor, 2002), we contend that this movement is at a critical moment in its evolution. Or, more accurately, we have arrived at *the* moment to be critical of this movement, its nature, and its place in teaching, schools, and teacher education. As veteran PDS practitioners—serving primarily as university-based teacher educators in boundary-spanning PDS roles—we are uniquely positioned to know and name what is perhaps the biggest challenge facing the PDS movement: the collaborative ideals of PDSs have been taken too far, moving from principles of partnership between school, district, and college/university personnel to an avoidance of discussion and conflict when answering the most foundational of questions, one we consider in this inaugural special issue—“What is a PDS?”.

As the NAPDS begins its tenth year of producing this journal—the only peer-reviewed publication dedicated to research on and in PDSs and school-university partnerships—we are attempting to begin the discussion of this apparently most controversial of queries, to critically consider the collaborations between individuals and institutions that represent the very nature of our work. Our association will soon also revisit its “Essentials” with another national conversation of these foundational notions and structures, but we intend this issue to be the first research-based examination of this “What is a PDS?” question.

Early in the PDS movement the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy determined that PDSs would be clinical schools consisting of selected public schools and colleges of education and arts and letters for preparing new teachers (1986). Early in its history the Holmes Group described PDSs as “a new kind of education institution that will be a partnership between public schools and universities” (1990, p. vii). Goodlad called them “schools of pedagogy” (1990), while Colburn named a PDS a “teaching hospital” (1993, p. 9).

This concept was extended by Anderson (1993), who determined that PDSs were induction schools for pre-service teachers’ completion of internships. Levine and Trachtman (1997) echoed many of these notions, describing a PDS as a symbiotic partnership between a school and a college of teacher education. This was similar to the framework proposed by Sykes, who suggested that a PDS was primarily an agreement between K-12 schools and a university (1997). Still, as of 1997, Dolly and Oda repeated the call for a clear definition of PDS partnerships, suggesting that the field did not wish to establish such clarity and that this allowed for schools to use the label according to their own meaning. This variable meaning was acknowledged again in 1999 by Metcalf-Turner.

While we find more intersections than divergences in these various scholars’ and practitioners’ definitions of a PDS, the focus of most descriptions of Professional Development Schools has been as settings for the preparation of teachers. The four core elements of PDSs articulated by the Holmes Partnership are generally recognized as guiding ideals, but across their now thirty-year history, the definition of a PDS has so often varied—often even within a given institutional setting—leading to long and sometimes heated discussions of organizational structure, obstacles, evaluation systems, and appropriate levels of support and compensation for PDS constituents.

Given the contextual nature of a PDS, one could even question whether a common working definition can—or should—be a concern of our field. Indeed, unless the specific context of a PDS is considered, one could argue that it is possible to have an exemplary, high-functioning PDS—one that addresses all of the Holmes tenets—but is still a structure that is dysfunctional in terms of practical benefits to at least some of its partners (Holmes Partnership, 1997; Shiveley & Taylor, 1998). In summary, the very quest to determine a common definition of PDS remains a question, a work in progress.

The fields of teacher education, PK-12 education, and educator professional development continue to evolve quickly and to face shifting accountability pressures. As well, a growing number of practitioners, scholars, and policy makers acknowledge that these fields must be merged—that classroom teachers must be recognized as school-based teacher educators, that teacher candidates must be prepared in the classrooms of the best teachers, and that university faculty must operate in "boundary-spanning" ways as scholars and practitioners. Yet our field continues to err on the side of caution with regard to determining with any clarity—to delineating with any sort of absolutes—just what is and what is not a PDS.

We contend that the PDS movement can only progress and be professionalized if we dare to answer these questions—first via this special issue and soon we hope on an everyday basis in our work. We would agree with Dolly and Oda (1997) and Higgins and Merickel (1997) that without some predetermined set of defining characteristics, PDS participants will find it difficult to define goals, to determine the required level of commitment of various partners, and to measure progress toward those goals. Little sense of the history of PDSs, coupled with the tendency to include all who wish to participate in such structures, has resulted in a tradition of calling virtually every such organization a PDS and in confusion between institutions, within institutions, and even within teacher education departments.

While the nation's move toward the PDS model and its reliance on school-university partnerships is necessary and welcomed, too little attention has been given by scholars, practitioners, and policy makers to the foundational questions of this new, merged field. We have called on the authors of this issue to detail research, to suggest novel concepts, and to describe highly impactful practices that address at least one of the following questions:

- What is a PDS? And how do you define PDS in your context?
- How do you document and evaluate progress in the development of your PDS?
- How do you assess the impact of your PDS on its various constituents?
- What criteria do you use to measure the effectiveness, growth, and/or impact of your PDS?
- What are the highlights and challenges you have encountered in documenting and assessing PDS progress and impact?

This Issue

This inaugural, themed, online issue of *School-University Partnerships* (*SUP*) supplements the bi-annual print editions of the journal. This issue consists of ten articles, in addition to this introductory contribution. Two of these pieces were invited and eight were peer-reviewed by a venerable editorial board. In our call for papers for this issue, we suggested that authors might submit more traditional research articles, briefer and more narrative-focused cases-in-point, or broader considerations of PDS work in the form of articles describing or illustrating conceptual frameworks.

The first group of articles is from the invited authors, followed by a peer-reviewed submission. Snow, Flynn, Whisenand, and Mohr examine the Professional Development School (PDS) research literature and arrive at five outcome claims that are supported by this literature, as well as several other emerging outcomes. Parker, Parsons, Groth, and Brown describe the difficult process of balancing the need to move toward authentic clinical teacher education practices with the need to respect the real and practical needs of all participating partnership stakeholders. And Reece, Roberts, and Smith describe the challenges and benefits associated with a three-year process of moving from a pilot PDS program in a college of education—as defined by the PDS Essentials—to a university-wide PDS program.

The next four articles in this issue focus on the question of defining a PDS in particular settings. After providing a helpful historical context for the definition and purposes of a PDS, Dresden, Blankenship, Capuozzo, Nealy and Tavernier use dialogue to address some of the problems associated with defining—both in theoretical and practical terms—the complexity of any given PDS. The article by Burns, Jacobs, Baker, and Donahue draws from the NAPDS Essentials, the NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel Report, and the NEA Report on Teacher Residencies Guiding Principles to identify seven "core ingredients" of a school-university partnership and then applies these to better link their PDS to clinical practice.

Polly adds to this discussion by using the lens of CAEP Standard 2 (focused on clinical practice and partnerships) and the NAPDS Essentials to share two differing perspectives of what a PDS might look like, with implications for how such standards can be used to help define and align partnership activities. And, finally, Yoshioka, Matsumoto, Fulton, and Nakamura use the PDS Essentials as a framework to share insights from key participants of a school-university, addressing the question of "What is a PDS?" while comparing a PDS orientation to a more traditional approach to preparing teacher candidates.

The next pairing of articles takes a closer look at the task of assessing a PDS. The first of these manuscripts, an article by Lewis and Walser, provides a definition and helpful characteristics of what a PDS is before discussing the creation, implications, and lessons learned of their evaluability assessment process (EA), a system that was created to help clarify how their PDSs were intended to work. This piece is followed by an article by Danley, Tye, Loman, Nickens, and Barlow that compares the growth of key teacher educator dispositions in a traditional PDS teacher preparation model and a more recently developed, clinically-based PDS teacher preparation structure.

This issue concludes with an article by Hartman, Kennedy, and Brady that looks beyond traditional initial licensure programs to examine the effectiveness of using a PDS Teaching Fellowship Program to increase the self-efficacy of teacher candidates across multiple areas of common concern for beginning teachers during the critical induction year.

Via this collection of articles we boldly aim to begin the conversations of "What is a PDS?"; we consider this discussion and the articulation of a vision for PDSs a professional right, opportunity, and responsibility. A movement—such as the PDS tradition with which we have each engaged for more than a decade—must never shy away from articulating its core principles or from engaging in candid, public discussions of what a PDS is and what it is not. We acknowledge that if PDS practitioners, scholars, and advocates do not soon define what is a PDS, someone else will—likely someone who knows and cares less about the promise of this model than we and the many members of NAPDS and the many PDS practitioner and constituents do.

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