What is a PDS? Reframing the Conversation

Janna Dresden
University of Georgia

With

Selena S. Blankenship
Jackson County School System

Robert M. Capuozzo
University of Georgia

Allison U. Nealy
University of Georgia

Mark D. Tavernier
Clarke County School District

Abstract: In the quest to answer questions about the definition of a PDS, this paper begins with an examination of the past and current status of PDSs, including the origins and history of the PDS concept, the purposes of PDS work, and the processes that facilitate PDS partnerships. The second section of the paper reframes the original question, using both a deeper engagement with theory and a more direct focus on specific practices. These sections are followed by a dialogue about these issues between the first author and PDS colleagues from the university and the school district. The paper concludes with some thoughts and questions to guide future PDS inquiry and practice.

KEYWORDS: professional development schools; school-university partnerships

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;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;

Introduction

In 1994 Robinson and Darling-Hammond wrote,

PDSs are much more than a fashionable new idea. They are an imperative of professional responsibility in education. They are the means for joining practitioners in public schools and universities in preparing and admitting future members to their profession….They are both the exemplars and the birthing places of tomorrow's schools. (pp. 217-218)

With these words the authors were entering into what was by then a frequent discussion about the meaning and purpose of a Professional Development School (PDS). It is a conversation that continues unabated today.

During the past 20 years, the conversation about PDSs has become more sophisticated and has expanded to include two interwoven questions: (1) What is a PDS? and (2) Are PDSs effective? Because we cannot know if something is effective if we do not know what it is, the perceived success of a PDS will be based entirely upon the definition that is used (Yendol-Hoppey & Smith, 2011). Thus, we need to know what a PDS is in order to know if the work of PDSs has lived up to the promise of the picture painted by Robinson and Darling-Hammond (1994). A third inter-related question has emerged as important in this ongoing conversation: Are PDSs sustainable? As with the question of effectiveness, we cannot answer the question about sustainability until we know what we are trying to sustain.

This article is an entry into the ongoing conversation about PDSs and instead of answering the question directly, it begins with an examination of the past and current status of PDSs, followed by a reframing of the questions using a greater emphasis on theory, and a dialogue among a group of PDS partners. The paper concludes with a set of thoughts and questions to guide future PDS inquiry and practice.

Professional Development Schools Examined

This part of the paper examines PDSs from a number of different perspectives. It begins with some preliminary answers to the questions of effectiveness and sustainability and then proceeds to problematize the initial question. Subsequent sections will examine the origins and early definitions of PDSs, provide a brief historical review of PDS work, an overview of the purposes of PDSs and a discussion about the processes that facilitate this work. Finally, the complexity of teaching and especially of PDS work will be considered as it relates to the attempt to define PDSs.

Can PDSs be Sustained? Are They Effective?

Though some PDS partnerships have been maintained for long periods of time, there are numerous stories of the demise of these partnerships and mounting evidence that there is an ebb and flow to engaged partnership work (e.g., Johnston-Parsons, 2012; Mitchell, Nath & Cohen, 2012; Pellegrino, Zenkov, Sell, & Calamito, 2014). Preliminary answers to the question of effectiveness were provided by reviews in the *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education on Professional Development Schools* (Neapolitan, 2011). These reviews confirmed the prevailing wisdom that the research providing direct links between 'being a PDS' and any

measureable outcomes, especially improvements in P-12 student learning, was scant at best. Wong and Glass (2011) found that, "the oft-repeated critiques about the lack of rigorous research on the outcomes of PDSs are nowhere more prevalent than in the area of the impacts on student learning and achievement" (p. 411). Similarly, a review of the literature from this same volume noted that there were no PDS partnerships that had systematically created and consistently used robust systems of accountability (Yendol-Hoppey & Smith, 2011).

These critiques and disappointments have echoed throughout PDS publications and conferences for many years. Given that the people who plan and participate in PDSs are unlikely to be less intelligent or less knowledgeable and certainly no less caring than others, we must ask ourselves, "Why do they have trouble maintaining their position as a PDS and why have they been unable to show, to a large extent, that the work they do is effective?" As educators we have determined that when a child cannot accomplish a task, it is not because the child has failed, but because we, as educators and/or as a society, have failed to provide the child what she needs to be successful. Sometimes the problem is vast and sometimes the problem is as simple as a poorly-constructed task, but the problem does not reside within the child. This rather heavy-handed analogy is presented to suggest that the field of PDS has not failed. Perhaps the task of proving the effectiveness of PDS work, based on a clearly defined and agreed-upon definition, is simply a poorly constructed task. In this paper, I argue that the field would benefit from simultaneously broadening and narrowing our focus, and by asking different questions.

Origins and Definitions

PDSs are often considered to be the education equivalent of a teaching hospital and serve as the place where theory and practice come together to better prepare future teachers, support practicing teachers in their work, and create optimal learning environments for students. Although the ideas that give form to the organizational structure we now call a PDS have been in the educational atmosphere since at least the time of John Dewey (1938), the current wave of interest in the PDS model was energized as a response to critiques of American education (Rutter, 2001). The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* served to consolidate and intensify existing general concern with the American system of education and as a result, "a plethora of reform agendas and reports were commissioned…that laid the groundwork for the professional development schools (PDS) movement" (Rutter, 2011, p. 291). These reports and initiatives included the Ford Foundation's Academy for Education Development, the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, the National Network for Education Renewal (NNER), and the Holmes Group (Rutter, 2011).

The Holmes Group, along with John Goodlad and his colleagues at NNER, is generally accorded the honor of giving rise to the modern PDS movement and a retrospective view shows that their proposals had two significant goals: (1) to professionalize the teaching profession and provide a vehicle for the empowerment of educators and (2) to increase the opportunities for teacher candidates to engage in substantive and supported clinical experiences as part of their preparation (Murray, 1986). The Holmes Group, made up of the deans of prestigious colleges of education from around the country, was an early advocate for providing teacher candidates with more and better-designed clinical experiences, though their sentiments were reiterated by many throughout the coming years (Darling-Hammond, 1994b; Murray, 1986; NCATE, 2010). As

Rutter (2011) explained, "In connecting university teacher education programs with schools as mutual partners, Holmes further expanded the idea of partner schools, thereby creating PDSs, an idea that far exceeded prior relationships of university teacher education field-based experiences" (p.297).

A Brief History

In the early days the PDS movement was centered on creating these new spaces: "In their first decade—the late 1980s and early 1990s—much of the focus of professional development schools' energies was on starting up the partnerships and making them work" (Teitel, 2004, p. 407). This emergent work was accomplished primarily through individual connections and relationships and was centered on people rather than on models or systems (Basile & Gutierrez, 2011; Teitel, 2004). Consistent with the idiosyncratic and dynamic way that most PDSs originated, they often existed on the periphery of traditional institutions and programs and may have even benefitted from this lack of oversight. Teitel (2004) explained that: "Early PDSs…functioned with high levels of autonomy, often outside of the scrutiny, and sometimes not even on the radar screen of school districts or larger university teacher education programs" (p. 403). Also in line with the emergent nature of the early examples of PDSs, the literature from this period did not focus on criteria or definitions (Breault & Breault, 2012), and was primarily descriptive (using case studies, surveys, and comparative analyses) or narrative—and telling stories became the dominant mode of scholarship for PDSs during this early phase (Basile & Gutierrez, 2011; Grossman, 2005; Miller & Silvernail, 2005; Neapolitan & Levine, 2011; Teitel, 2004).

However, the next decade of PDS activity began to be marked by a greater emphasis on defining criteria and the development of structures to explain and frame PDS work. For example, by the late 1990s the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) had begun to work on developing a set of criteria or standards for PDSs (Teitel, 2004). Two developments may have necessitated this increased attention to clarifying statements, labels, and definitions. The first is that scholars and practitioners had begun to notice that "the ideals of professional development schools have been unevenly implemented, and many sites that have adopted the label have not created the strong relationships or adopted the set of practices anticipated for such schools" (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. xi). The second factor was that PDSs had begun to attract more attention and to move from the periphery of institutions to a more central role (Teitel, 2004). PDS programs were more visible, some were expanded, and the demand for meaningful partnership work began to increase. A more clearly articulated definition was needed to support this shift in the status of PDSs and to control the use of the term as it became both more recognizable and more popular. Thus, the early 1990s were marked by frequent debates and discussions about the exact meaning of a PDS, but by the end of that decade a consensus had begun to emerge around the goals of improving student learning, improving the preparation of educators, improving the professional development of educators, and research and inquiry into the improvement of practice (Teitel, 2004).

Although a more clearly defined structure enabled PDSs to take on a greater role in schools and in teacher education programs, as well as receive more financial support, there were notable challenges that resulted from these changes. Clear guidelines were sometimes viewed as

constraints and it was feared that PDSs would become less vital and less generative. Teitel (2004) articulated this viewpoint:

> The trip in from the margins—the development of PDSs as more central to schools, school systems and universities—comes with its own set of problems and challenges. One challenge is retaining the spontaneity and creativeness that early developers of PDSs…saw as an important hallmark of what this new kind of collaboration would bring. (p. 403)

In addition, support sometimes turned into expectations of specific activities and outcomes and even demands that PDSs help achieve the priorities of upper level administration in schools and universities (Teitel, 2004).

Both of these strands of thinking about PDSs continue to be evident today. Although historically the grass-roots and emergent vision of PDSs preceded a more structured and defined perspective of PDS work, each approach can be seen in one or more organizations that are currently involved with the PDS movement in some way. For example, the NNER and the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) have goals that focus on guiding, supporting, and stimulating PDS work, consistent with a vision of PDSs as emergent and dynamic. In contrast, NCATE has taken an approach more focused on definitions and structures and has directed their attention to "the professionalization of teaching through standard setting and accountability" (Neapolitan & Levine, 2011, p. 310).

What is the Purpose of a PDS?

The purpose of a PDS is to facilitate exemplary teacher education by serving as a space in which theory and practice not only meet, but where each way of knowing and understanding the world enriches the other. "Linking theory and practice in ways that theorize practice and make formal learning practical" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 307) is thought to improve teacher preparation, provide support to practicing teachers, facilitate research into problems of practice, and ultimately improve the learning experiences of students in the P-12 system (Teitel, 2004).

This blending of theory and practice is critical in order to prepare teacher candidates who are ready to teach in today's classrooms. Teacher candidates need both academic knowledge and extensive authentic experience in classrooms (Anderson & Freebody, 2012), but more importantly they need to learn how to apply and use this knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Levine, 2010) and how to reflect on their experiences to learn from them (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). A meaningful connection between theory and practice must be the essence of teacher preparation and it is the responsibility of teacher educators to develop "pedagogies, models and structures that innovatively close the gap between practice and theory, making praxis possible" (Anderson & Freebody, 2012, p. 362).

PDSs were originally envisioned as exemplars of such productive educational environments because they made it possible to blend theory and practice into powerful clinical experiences for teacher candidates. It was assumed that these types of experiences would produce more effective teachers. Recent research into the problem of teacher attrition has indeed shown that substantive clinical experiences, such as practice teaching, not only contribute to the development of expertise by providing opportunities to observe the teaching of others and to receive substantive feedback on one's teaching, they also contribute to teacher retention

(Ingersoll et al., 2014). Teachers who have participated in these types of experiences are more likely to stay in teaching and continue their careers as teachers for longer than do teachers who did not have these clinical experiences in their preparation programs (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

What are the Processes that Facilitate the Work of a PDS?

Theory and practice are abstract concepts. In reality, PDS work is done by people who come from two different institutions, a university and a school, and the institutions are identified with these abstract concepts—the university with theory and schools with practice. However, as Anderson and Freebody (2012) wrote, "The theory-practice divide is made and therefore can be un-made if there is the institutional will to do so" (p. 360). To create a PDS and 'un-make' the theory-practice divide requires the desire to do so and positive relationships among the people who work in these two institutional settings. The processes that facilitate the work of a PDS are the result of positive relationships that develop from trust and respect; trust and respect are in turn the product of communication and familiarity (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 1994).

To develop familiarity takes a lot of time, a lot of communication (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 1994), and a willingness to be flexible. Ultimately, people must sit down together and talk to one another. Meetings, though frequently disparaged, are in fact the place where much of the work of creating a PDS occurs. In these spaces, dialogue can happen and it is through dialogue that shared understanding is developed (Johnston-Parsons, 2012). In addition, "opportunities to communicate and share in direction-setting both solidify the mutual trust and respect that are essential for collaborations and contribute to the team learning and shared vision that motivate continued work together" (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 212). The process of working together is enacted through relationships that are strengthened by openness and flexibility (James et al., 2015), and built upon a foundation of the reciprocal processes of dialogue and trust. Trust is necessary to engage in meaningful dialogue (Johnston-Parsons, 2012) because without trust people are unlikely to say what they believe and thus not achieve an authentic shared understanding. The reciprocal is also true: Honest dialogue is the means through which trust is developed because when people have shared their beliefs, viewpoints, hopes, and fears, they begin to trust one another.

PDS Work is Complex

Many scholars have commented on the extraordinary complexity of teaching practice (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Cochran-Smith, 2014; Grossman et al., 2009; Hollins, 2011). If teaching is complex, how much more complex is PDS work that situates teaching practice within a nexus of different multi-faceted institutions, each of which is embedded in multiple contexts (Grossman, 2005)? An additional layer of complexity is added because for a PDS, the learning of P-12 students is viewed as just one of several significant goals. Wiseman (2011) worried about the complexity of PDS work and the difficulty this created for evaluating the effectiveness of PDSs, explaining that,

> The diversity of partnership processes, funding mechanisms, local needs and goals, and data collection procedures are only some of the unique features of partnership that inhibit common reporting or standardization. The very nature of PDS formation, which often

emerges from unique local needs or individual relationships, interferes with standardized response and accountability. The varieties of PDS goals, processes, and accountability methods make it difficult to cross-analyze or go beyond what many consider an anecdotal approach to discussing outcomes. (p. 569)

Though the complexity of PDS work may make research and evaluation in this area seem daunting, it might be possible to view this characteristic not as a liability but as an asset. Our perspective on complexity might be changed by recognizing that growth and development are more likely to occur when a variety of viewpoints are considered. Systems and structures must be re-imagined to allow for productive change (Basile & Gutierrez, 2011). Thus, complexity might even be considered necessary: "To produce innovation, more complexity is essential; more relationships, more sources of information more angles on the problem" (Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *The Change Masters*, p. 148, cited in Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Reframing and Revisiting the Questions

The preceding brief review of the history and purpose of PDS work and the processes that make it possible have highlighted the complexity of this work and brought us no closer to a definition of a PDS. In this part of the paper the presenting question(s) will be considered from both a theoretical and practical perspective. In the first section, three theories currently being used in the field of teacher education will be explored and in the second section the impact of these theories on the presenting questions will be addressed. A third section will present a review of research into the impact of specific pedagogical practices in the context of PDSs. The final section of this part of the paper will re-visit the original question: What is a PDS?

At this juncture, I propose to simultaneously broaden our perspective by making better use of theory, and narrow our perspective by becoming more firmly grounded in the world of practice. Integrating theory and practice means that we do not have to choose between them. However, we should not abandon both and become mired in rules without meaning and action without purpose. Rather, the integration of theory and practice means using each to clarify and provide direction for the other. Thus, it is possible to be at once more theoretical and more clearly focused on specific practices.

It is important to become more intentional and explicit in our use of theory because theories provide ways to explain what happens and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of our practice (Johnston-Parsons, 2012). Though the strong focus on practice has been and continues to be a foundation of PDS work, this does not require that we abdicate a focus on theory, as Tobin (1995) explains: "The practicality of our teaching and scholarship is a virtue which only becomes a deficit when it lacks an active engagement with theory" (p. 223). Also, as Forester (1989) reminds us, "Theories do not solve problems in the world, people do. Nevertheless, good theory...can help alert us to problems, remind us of what we care about, or prompt our practical insights into the cases we confront" (p. 12). Finally, a meaningful use of theory can encourage us to examine new and perhaps better questions and guide us to a more profound understanding of the work we have done and of the work that remains to be done. The next section will examine several theories that have been recently explored in the teacher education literature that might guide the search for more productive questions.

Theories in Teacher Education

This section briefly discusses cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), the theoretical work of Delueze and Guattari (1987), and investigates the use of complexity theory in teacher education as proposed by Cochran-Smith et al. (2014). The purpose of presenting these theories is not to imply that any one of them *should* be used in future research and writing about PDSs, but rather to show how they have been employed, and to provide examples of how a deeper engagement with theory might clarify our understanding of PDSs. All three of these theoretical frameworks are useful for our engagement with PDSs because they highlight the indeterminate and multi-faceted nature of all human endeavor.

CHAT, for example, emphasizes the collective nature of learning and is based on the premise that learning results from action situated within specific contexts (Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010). Because context and activity are so completely intertwined, the process of learning to teach is made more challenging by differences between the school and university settings in which teacher candidates participate (Jahreie & Ottesen, 2010). However, the perspective provided by CHAT makes evident that these challenges are not necessarily negative. Specifically, CHAT can provide a useful lens for teacher education because contradictions and tensions are seen not as problematic, but as productive: "By centering the activity of teacher learning in the contradictory, conflictual spaces among the university, school, and community's knowledge and practice, the possibility for collaborative efforts around these contradictions can lead to remediation of novice teachers' learning" (Zeichner, Payne & Brayko, 2015, p. 125). The usefulness of CHAT as a theoretical framework is that it encourages teacher educators to consider the discontinuities between schools and universities not as problems, but as spaces within which powerful learning can occur for all participants. Thus the inevitable differences that arise should be used as opportunities for growth rather than as a justification to diminish or discontinue the work (Zeichner et al, 2015).

The theoretical framework proposed by Delueze and Guattari (1987) also eschews constraining definitions and tidy cause-effect analyses. They use the metaphor of the 'rhizome' and consider organizations, action in the world, and even theories to be 'rhizomatic,' that is, non-linear, non-hierarchical and non-symmetrical. From this vantage point any description that focuses on clear-cut analysis will necessarily miss much of the messy and unpredictable and important 'stuff' that happens below-ground.

'Assemblage' is another significant concept in their framework. They suggest that we should not attempt to study things in isolation, but instead focus on the connections among things. An assemblage is created by how we look at a situation, so we might choose to view as an assemblage a specific teacher candidate-mentor teacher-student group-school building-university professor-school principal. Thus, within any given school or classroom there are a whole host of different possible combinations or sets of connections and Delueze and Guattari (1987) use the term assemblage to describe each of these sets of connections. They also emphasize emergence and contingency as ways of describing the lack of predictability of assemblages—until a situation plays out you cannot be sure what will happen. Small events can have big effects. 'Becomings' has to do with appreciating that things are in flux and it is only in interaction with other elements in an assemblage that identities and meanings form, and even then only temporarily.

Strom (2015) used Delueze and Guattari's (1987) theory in her study of a first year teacher because it enabled her to attend to varied contexts within which the work was situated, and to recognize the vast number of factors that influence even the smallest pieces of teaching practice:

> A rhizomatic framework offers a way to conceptualize teaching as non-linear, multiply constituted, and inherently complex processes....Viewing teaching as assemblage means...the teacher is no longer seen as an autonomous being...instead she is considered one element working within a constellation of multiple elements, all of which work together to jointly construct or shape her teaching practice....teaching is a collectively negotiated activity. (p. 322)

A review of PDS history, purpose, and the processes that support them confronts us with the extraordinary complexity inherent in even a single PDS. This complexity has confounded attempts at definition and frustrated the search for answers to questions about effectiveness and sustainability. Recent scholarship in teacher education has explored complexity theory, as used in sociology, to propose a new approach, "an opening and broadening perspective that invites new questions, methods, and combinations of research tools" (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2014, p. 16). A broader perspective may be exactly what is needed to help us grapple with the struggles we are currently encountering in the PDS community. A perspective that highlights the power of relationships, acknowledges the enormous variety and unpredictability of our community, recognizes the emergent nature of most PDS partnerships, accounts for the lack of linear mechanisms of change, and yet still enables us to consider how we might learn from and support one another would be profoundly beneficial to the ongoing study of PDSs. In a recent article, Cochran-Smith and her colleagues (2014) have offered a perspective that fulfills all these needs as well as, perhaps most importantly, showing how complexity theory can guide the field towards more powerful and productive questions.

First, these authors explain that studies using complexity theory "need to account for and foreground relationships*, interactions, and processes across levels" (p. 28). Second, acknowledging variety

> and unpredictability...requires...more complex and contingent notions of agency and responsibility that depend on deep understanding of the local (e.g., initial conditions, sequences, and transformative events) linked to larger understanding of processes and outcomes at various systems levels that are widely variable but not inexplicable. (p. 21)

Third, complex systems are recognized as emergent in this theoretical framework: "Their change and growth occurs as a bottom-up emergent process, rather than as a top-down directed process" (p. 25). In addition, complexity theory rejects linear notions of cause and effect, but does not reject "the idea that things have causes...Understanding cause as complex, multiple, and contingent is quite consistent with focusing on the particulars of local contexts" (p. 20). And despite the variety, fluidity, and contextualized and emergent nature of educational settings, complexity theory proposes that it is possible to "contribute insights about the particular that are also useful beyond the local context and beyond a single moment in time" (p. 19). Finally, using complexity theory to engage in a reconceptualization of teacher education

> is a rich source of questions for investigation: *How do teacher education program systems interact with schools as systems?...What learning opportunities for teacher candidates emerge from different types of interactions and relationships? To what extent*

are teacher candidates' abilities to enact teaching that enables learning for all students influenced by different school system/teacher education system interactions and relationships? How do these influence students' learning opportunities and outcomes?. (p. 26)

The Impact of Theory: A Need for New Questions

Using what we have learned from a quick review of CHAT, Delueze and Guattari (1987), and complexity theory it has become apparent that we may have been asking the wrong questions. I suggest that we need to move from such deceptively simple questions as, "What is a PDS?" to more generative questions. If classroom teaching is complex, which it undoubtedly is, how much more complex is PDS work that exists at the intersection of multiple sets of institutions and teaching traditions? If our vision of teaching recognizes complexity, then so must we recognize the complexity of "being a PDS." And in fact, as a field we have generally acknowledged that "The inherent nature of PDS work [is] locally constructed in collaborative processes...in customized formats closely linked to the particular conditions within each partnership" (Wong & Glass, 2011, p. 411). Thus asking the question, "What is a PDS?" is a potentially reductionist approach that assumes a linear logic and might lead to the construction of a binary (PDS/not PDS) that limits both accessibility and potential. As some have noted "the feasibility of maintaining a 'perfect' PDS becomes more and more difficult" (Mitchell et al., 2014, p. 126). In addition, by focusing on the definition of a PDS we limit our ability to study the impact of our practices. It is not possible to study of the impact of a PDS because a PDS is not a coherent entity—it is a contextualized combination of many variables. Each PDS is a unique assemblage of specific people, places, buildings, policies, geographies, furniture, attitudes, and climate.

Because every PDS is a unique assemblage, the search for clarity may obscure the complex and contextualized nature of all PDS work and divert our attention from having conversations, making choices, and taking action. Rather than asking for definitions of a PDS, our community would be better served by asking such generative questions as: "What practices are enabled and facilitated by PDS partnerships?" and "What practices are most effective for what ends in which contexts?" Therefore, just as a deeper engagement with theory leads us to ask different questions, so these questions will lead us back to a stronger investigation of practice. By asking a different set of questions, it will be more feasible to find answers to queries about effectiveness and sustainability. We will be able to consider what practices are enabled by PDSs and to examine those practices within their local context as we take into account the myriad of variables that make up each specific example of PDS-enabled activity. Our focus should now be on identifying and creating contexts that facilitate a range of useful, productive, and meaningful pedagogies, as well as on examining those specific pedagogies themselves. It will be important to "identify the specific kinds of uniquely configured, research-based pedagogy that supports" learning of teacher candidates in PDS settings (Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014, p. 19) and to investigate the impact of specific, PDS-enabled pedagogies on the learning of P-12 students.

A Focus on Specific Practices

The attempt to clearly define a PDS in order to synthesize the impact of such structures will both limit and constrain our field of practice and the research that we conduct. I would argue that it is not possible nor would it be advantageous to have such a unified, but narrow, approach. Our field needs a more nuanced, and ultimately richer, view of the work we do and the impact it has. Thus, the focus of inquiry should change from 'What is a PDS?' and 'Are PDSs effective?' to, "What practices are enabled and facilitated by PDS partnerships?" and "What practices are most effective for what ends in which contexts?" It turns out, of course, that much of this scholarship already exists, because we as a community have been hard at work for many years. There is a long-standing body of research that has explored the pedagogies of teacher education that have been made possible by PDS partnerships. For example, Yendol-Hoppey and Franco (2014) found that,

> teacher educators developed integrated coursework and fieldwork using focused observation, elements of the inquiry process, and coaching/mentoring. In combination, these pedagogical approaches collaboratively offered by university and school-based teacher educators created links between theory and practice, building knowledge for, in and of practice. (p. 30)

These authors also noted that classrooms where PDS mentors and teacher candidates work together are spaces where "pedagogies of engagement and formation" are more likely to be employed (Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014, p. 25). A number of other examples of the clinically-rich practices enabled by PDSs have been reviewed (e.g., Dresden, Kittleson, & Wenner, 2014) and thoroughly described (e.g., Kittleson, Dresden, & Wenner, 2013) in various publications.

Teitel (2004) pointed out that over the years there has been an increasing commitment to examining the impact of the pedagogical practices embedded in PDSs. Though this research has primarily described and investigated the impact of specific practices on teacher candidates, there is a more recent trend to study the impact of specific practices on students and teachers in the K-12 system, as well. For example, research has shown that a middle-school project that succeeded in getting students to think more deeply about citizenship was the direct result of PDS structures (Pellegrino et al., 2014), and that teams, developed within the context of a PDS partnership, were able to engage in child-centered practices "that would not otherwise be possible" (James, et al., 2015, p. 60).

Along with studying the practices that are embedded within PDSs and the impact of these specific practices, scholars have cautioned that it will be important to consider carefully what counts as impact (Teitel, 2004). As James and her colleagues (2015) asked, "How do we measure the degree to which children are benefitting from PDS work? Beyond test scores and retention rates, what are the markers by which PDS work is deemed worthwhile for the lives of students?" (p. 53).

Despite this warning, we have a substantial body of literature, merely hinted at in this paper, which indicates the vibrant activity going on in PDS settings. And this is exactly the type of research that needs to occur in order for PDSs to fulfill their potential. Studies of specific practices in specific contexts should be the foundation of our collective research agenda. "The community of praxis approach…albeit modest and context-specific, demonstrates the potential

of effective partnerships" (Anderson & Freebody, 2012, p. 374). Small, thoughtful investigations will enable us to understand our own endeavors and communicate them effectively to others, because as Linda Darling-Hammond (1994b) has said, "the work of restructuring—and the ideas that finally count—are entirely local" (p. 19).

Questions of effectiveness are more successfully addressed when the complexity of any given PDS is acknowledged and when the research focus is local, specific, and contextualized. Similarly, questions about the sustainability of PDSs are dependent on recognizing and responding to their inherent complexity, "the roles, structures, and governance models must become more complex…This shift is essential to long-term sustainability" (Basile, & Gutierrez 2011, p. 512). And just as questions of effectiveness require a broader, more theoretical lens at the same time that they require a greater focus on local and specific practices, PDSs are more likely to be sustained when the vision that undergirds them is broader (Zeichner et al., 2015) and when the structures that support and surround them are adaptable (involving equal parts of chaos and order) (Johnston-Parsons, 2012).

What is a PDS? Revisiting the Question

Though we have moved beyond this potentially reductionistic question, we can still consider the meaning of the term, PDS. I would suggest that a PDS is not a thing; rather, it is a set of relationships. A PDS is not a product; instead, it is a process. Like Dewey's description of democracy, a PDS "involves individuals in communication with others in constructing the community, a process that is ongoing" (Johnston-Parsons, 2012, p. 74). And it is the role of leaders of this community to "coordinate things in ways that [allow] for more collaborative practices to evolve" (Johnston-Parsons, 2012, p. 86). Viewed in this way, a PDS is a context, a community, constructed (and continually re-constructed) through conversation and dialogue. Further, the community of a PDS has a responsibility to enable practices that integrate theory and practice to benefit learners. If there were a defined model of a PDS, it could be implemented or imposed. However, if PDSs are 'places of becoming,' constantly being co-constructed and re-envisioned, then their development will take time and there will be no point of arrival. Thus, as scholars and practitioners, we must focus on the processes of dialogue and the actions that follow because, quite simply, there is nothing else.

Dialogue

To showcase the conversation that I believe is the essence of PDS work, I sent an early draft of this paper to several partners (for a description of our PDS partnership see Dresden, Gilbertson, & Tavernier, 2016). Their thoughts are italicized below and my responses follow.

I'm wondering about the role of leadership as it relates to both PDS sustainability and PDS practices. Many reforms are often leader-dependent in that when the leader leaves the reform quickly follows. In our case, we've been fortunate in that most, if not all of our school-based leaders have been in place since the inception of our PDS partnership. That's not the case on the university-end. A couple of key players have moved on and the initial professor in residence has retired. I'm wondering if the same had been true on the

District end (loss of the superintendent, retirement of several PDS principals), how this would have impacted the partnership, if at all?

I'm also wondering about the merging of theory and practice that you've developed in the article. How do we begin or continue to carve out time for discussions of both—and build that into the sustainability of the partnership? How can we continue and expand the use of those on the university end who are immersed in those practices?
                                                            —Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services

I wonder about the issue of change in leadership, too. I suppose we can't know for sure. My hope is that if our partnership is strong in many ways, includes lots of people, and most (if not all) people feel that there are benefits from the work we do together, the partnership will continue. I think we have also talked about how important good communication at multiple levels within and across institutional boundaries is to the success of our partnership. But I suppose the bottom line is that we need to be in it because it works for now and because we think it is important work that helps learners of all ages…and we can't worry about the rest. Your second question about merging theory and practice—maybe we should put that on an agenda for a meeting and talk about what that looks like to us…and how we would like it to look for our partnership.

I am drawn to the section on sustainability. Perhaps it is because of my unique position, but I see structure, parameters, measurable outcomes, clear goals, and well-defined roles as all critical components to the sustainability of our relationship. In my role, their absence may be detrimental to my effectiveness as a PIR.
                                                            —District-wide Professor-in-Residence

Yes, as much as I argue for openness and flexibility, if there is not agreement on what each of us, as actors in our group of PDSs, is supposed to do, that will definitely threaten our ability, not just to sustain our work, but to do it at all. There is always a tension between the need for structure and the need to be open to possibility. And sometimes I think people get caught, not in the middle, but in the most difficult spaces of both: within some structures that may not provide enough guidance and other structures that limit the chance to be responsive to needs and try out new things. We'll need to find some ways to address these issues.

Is it helpful to view PDS partnerships through a "communities of practice" lens? PDS as a community of practice that informs, and is informed by theory?
                                                            —Middle School Principal

Yes! I think it's incredibly helpful. I did some reading on this but don't think much of it made it into the draft of the paper that you read. Hopefully, this paper is an example of a community of practice, of a group of people working together, engaged in a variety of practices and reflecting on those practices together. Maybe we should try to write an article about this!

You wrote, "Positive relationships develop from trust and respect and these attitudes are in turn the result of communication and familiarity."I couldn't agree more with you on this point…two years into my current role as professor-in-residence at a PDS continues

to illustrate this point; what troubles me continually is the time needed to form these relationships is generally available on my end but typically not the classroom teachers' end, usually they'd have to add more time to their day. In the past semester or two we've been occasionally "pulling" mentors during school hours from their classrooms which gives us some time and allows teacher candidates some time solo with the students. Seems like a win-win to me, and the Principal.

<div align="right">

—Professor-in-Residence from an elementary school

</div>

I think it's wonderful that you have worked out, if not a solution, at least a 'work-around' for that perennial problem of finding time to meet. And it is also a terrific example of a local solution. While the problem may be nearly universal, the solutions need to be created within a very specific set of circumstances (time, place, personalities, policies, etc.).

Reflecting on the Dialogue

These snippets of conversation highlight the links between theoretical issues (e.g., establishing trust) and individual, context-specific practices (e.g., finding ways for mentor teachers to have time to meet with a professor-in-residence). They also illustrate the messy and vague meanderings that characterize our PDS partnership and the ways in which it is co-constructed not through elaborate plans, but through small ideas, the expression of concern, and tentative wonderings.

This brief dialogue also provides a window into the meaning of collaboration in our partnership. We have re-conceptualized how, when and even why we work together. For us, collaboration does not mean speaking with one voice—rather it means providing space for conversation and honoring the individual voices of each and every member of our community. Thus, the structure of this article intentionally reflects the views of the author along with some independent yet connected perspectives offered by colleagues. Our goal is not agreement, nor even a collective vision, but a focus on inquiry and a commitment to moving forward together, one step at a time.

Conclusion

Reviewing the history and theoretical basis of the PDS movement has shown that attempts to develop clear and immutable definitions of a PDS will narrow our vision and impede our progress. The power of PDS work comes from grass-roots energy, the excitement of variety, and the strength of complexity. By recognizing and harnessing these characteristics we will be able to move forward as individuals, as groups of many shapes and sizes, and as an entire community of teachers, students, writers, researchers, scholars, and always, learners.

In this paper I have traced a path from questions of definition to questions about practice, rooted in theory. I began with the question of "What is a PDS?" and moved to what I believe will be more powerful and productive questions: "What practices are enabled and facilitated by PDS partnerships?" and "What practices are most effective for what ends in which contexts?" These questions, when grounded in powerful theories, open the door for inquiry, for exploration, and for moving forward. Guided by the needs, abilities, interests, and capacity of our PDS

communities, we can investigate possibilities and strive to improve the learning environments that surround us. And now the path continues to what may be the most generative questions of all:

- What do we wonder?
- What is the next step for our PDS?
- What shall we do tomorrow?

References

Anderson, J. J., & Freebody, K. (2012). Developing communities of praxis: Bridging the theory practice divide in teacher education. *McGill Journal of Education*, *47*(3), 359-377.

Ball, D. L., & Forzani, F. M. (2009). The work of teaching and the challenge for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *60*(5), 497-511.

Basile, C. G., & Gutierrez, C. (2011). Universities, schools, and communities: A new generation of professional development school roles, structures, and governance. *Teachers College Record*, *113*(14), 511-530.

Breault, R., & Breault, D. A. (2012). *Professional development schools: Researching lessons from the field.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Cochran-Smith, M., Ell, F., Ludlow, L., Grudnoff, L., & Aitken, G. (2014). The challenge and promise of complexity theory for teacher education research. *Teachers College Record, 116*(5), 1-38.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). Introduction. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession* (pp. vii-xii). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). Developing professional development schools: Early lessons, challenge, and promise. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession* (pp. 1-27). New York: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). How teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *57*(3), 300-314.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus (*B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Dresden, J., Gilbertson, E., & Tavernier, M. (2016). University of Georgia and Clarke County School District: Creating a dynamic and sustainable district-wide partnership. *School-University Partnerships*, *9*(1), 3-6.

Dresden, J., Kittleson, J., & Wenner, J. (2014). Clinically rich practices in teacher education: Review and recommendations. In J. Ferrara, J.L. Nath, & I. N. Guadarrama (Eds.), *Creating visions for university-school partnerships* (pp. 43-60). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Ellis, V., Edwards, A., & Smagorinsky, P. (2010). Introduction. In V. Ellis, A. Edwards, & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Cultural-historical perspectives on teacher education and development: Learning teaching* (pp. 1-10). New York, NY: Routledge.

Feiman-Nemser, S. (2012). *Teachers as learners*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Forester, J. (1989). *Planning in the face of power*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Grossman, P. (2005). In pursuit of a dual agenda: Creating a middle level professional development school. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession* (pp. 50-73). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Grossman, P., Compton, C., Igra, D., Ronfeldt, M., Shahan, E., & Williamson, P.W. (2009). Teaching practice: A cross-professional perspective. *Teachers College Record*, *111*(9), 2055-2100.

Hollins, E. (2011). Teacher preparation for quality teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *62*(4), 395-407.

Ingersoll, R. I., Merrill, L., & May, H. (2014). *What are the effects of teacher education and preparation on beginning teacher attrition?* Research Report (#RR-82). Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Jahreie, C. F., & Ottesen, E. (2010). Learning to become a teacher: Participation across spheres for learning. In V. Ellis, A. Edwards, & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Cultural-historical perspectives on teacher education and development: Learning teaching* (pp. 131-145). New York, NY: Routledge.

James, J. H., Kobe, J., Shealey, G., Foretich, R., & Sabatini, E. (2015). Authentic collaborative inquiry: Initiating and sustaining partner research in the PDS setting. *School-University Partnerships*, *8*(2), 53-61.

Johnston-Parsons, M., & PDS Colleagues. (2012). *Dialogue and difference in a teacher education program: A 16-year sociocultural study of a professional development school*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Kittleson, J., Dresden, J., & Wenner, J. (2013). Describing the "supported collaborative teaching model": A designed setting to enhance teacher education. *School-University Partnerships*, *6*(2), 20-31.

Levine, M. (2010). *Developing principles for clinically based teacher education*. Washington, DC: National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Miller, L., & Silvernail, D. L. (2005). Wells Junior High School: Evolution of a professional development school. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession* (pp. 28-49). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Mitchell, L. A., Nath, J. L., & Cohen, M. D. (2014). When a professional development school program becomes unsustainable: Trying to keep the best of both worlds. In J. Ferrara, J. L. Nath, & I. N. Guadarrama (Eds.), *Creating visions for university-school partnerships* (pp. 105-128). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Murray, F. B. (1986). Goals for the reform of teacher education: An executive summary of the Holmes Group. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *68*(1), 28-32.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2010). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: A national strategy to prepare effective teachers*. Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning. Washington, DC: Author.

Neapolitan, J. E., & Levine, M. (2011). Purpose and vision of professional development schools. *Teachers College* Record, *113*(14), 306-324.

Pellegrino, A., Zenkov, K., Sell, C., Calamito, N. (2014). Lifting as we climb: A citizen project in a professional development school setting. *School-University Partnerships*, *7*(1), 64-84.

Robinson, S. P., & Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). Change for collaboration and collaboration for change: Transforming teaching through school-university partnerships. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession* (pp. 203-219). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Rutter, A. (2011). Purpose and vision of professional development schools. *Teachers College Record*, *113*(14), 289-305.

Strom, K. J. (2015). Teaching as assemblage: Negotiating learning and practice in the first year of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *66*(4), 321-333.

Teitel, L. (2004). Two decades of professional development school development in the United States: What have we learned? Where do we go from here? *Journal of In-service Education*, *30*(4), 401-416.

Teitel, L. (2011). Afterword. *Teachers College Record, 113*(14), 577-590.

Tobin, J. (1995). Post-Structural research in early childhood education. In J.A. Hatch (Ed.), *Qualitative research in early* childhood settings (pp. 223-244) New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

Wiseman, D. L. (2011). Response to section IV: What's needed now: Issues of professional development school accountability and sustainability in today's complex educational environment. *Teachers College Record, 113*(14), 567-576.

Wong, P. L., & Glass, R. D. (2011). Professional development schools and student learning and achievement. *Teachers College Record, 113*(14), 403-431.

Yendol-Hoppey, D., & Franco, Y. (2014). In search of signature pedagogy for PDS teacher education. *School-University Partnerships*, *7*(1), 17-34.

Yendol-Hoppey, D., & Smith, J. J. (2011). What do we know about accountability and resources In professional development schools? *Teachers College Record, 113*(14), 531-566.

Zeichner, K., Payne, K. A., & Brayko, K. (2015). Democratizing teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *66*(2), 122-135.

Janna Dresden is a clinical associate professor and coordinates the PDS partnership in her role as Director of the Office of School Engagement at the University of Georgia. Selena Blankenship is the former principal at Hilsman Middle School, a PDS. She currently serves as Director of Human Resources for Jackson County School System. Bob Capuozzo is a clinical assistant professor and the early childhood program coordinator at the University of Georgia. He is also a Professor-in-Residence (PIR) at an elementary PDS. Allison Nealy is a clinical associate professor at the University of Georgia and a former special education teacher. She serves as a District-Wide Professor-in-Residence in the area of special education. Mark Tavernier is Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services and School Performance for Clarke County School District. He has held a variety of positions during his 34 years in public education.