EdCamp

Listening to the Voices of Teachers

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Introduction

Professional development (PD) is common in the teacher landscape and often takes the form of workshops arranged for and provided by schools, districts, and educational cooperatives. Effective PD can be a powerful tool in school success and teacher satisfaction; however, teachers often report their PD experiences as lackluster or not responsive to their immediate needs (Desimone, 2011; Guskey, 2009; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). The impact of these offerings is often vague, may not offer guidance for continued teacher development or school improvement (Zimmerman & May, 2003), and may not support teachers in meeting students' needs (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

While the traditional PD models may not be well received, teachers could use support in the form of relevant, personalized, and responsive PD. Teachers need professional support in today's educational environment to implement new curriculum standards, appropriately integrate new technology, prepare students for both old and new test formats,

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support diverse learners, and meet the criteria imposed by new teacher evaluation systems.

The purpose of this study is to examine one model for staging relevant and responsive PD for teachers: Edcamp. Data from the workshops scheduled and teacher responses to a survey will be explored. Specifically, the research questions are as follows:

1. How do teachers describe their typical professional development experiences?

2. What professional development topics, issues and needs are being requested by teachers in one local context?

3. How do teachers respond to the "Edcamp" professional development model?

Literature Review

PD is a key element of teachers' professional lives. In order to retain and maintain a valid teaching license, many states require teachers to complete a minimum number of PD hours in the form of workshops, conference attendance, or graduate coursework (Gusky, 2000; Gusky, 2002). These requirements reflect the belief that teachers are life-long learners and promote a perceived level of professionalism in the field commensurate with professionals in other disciplines.

Teachers have many choices when it comes to their PD. Akiba (2012) identifies seven primary modes for teacher growth and development: (1) school and district based PD models, (2) teacher collaboration, (3) university coursework, (4) professional conferences, (5) mentoring/coaching relationships, (6) informal communications with more knowledgeable colleagues, and (7) self-study. Within this range of choices, teachers tend to spend the majority of their time in informal consultation with one another and in peer collaboration (Birman, et al., 2009) as well as in self-study activities focused on their students and classroom contexts (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002; Scribner, 2003).

When teachers do engage in formalized PD, it is most commonly delivered via packaged PD programs delivered locally via school or district-based workshops (Akiba, 2012). Yet, these PD models often do not receive positive reviews as they are based in transmission models, are not responsive to teachers' immediate needs, do not allow for teacher discussion, and provide little follow-up (Richardson, 2003; Torff & Sessions, 2009). The content of these PD opportunities tends to reflect the latest trend or fad and may not be supported by a depth of research (Gusky, 2000).

Teachers exposed to traditional PD assert that the topics delivered

to them in workshop are disconnected to their needs and lived experiences. They note that school-based PD is impractical, not supported with appropriate resources (Torff & Sessions, 2009), and presenters are perceived as having minimal or outdated classroom experiences (Borko, 2004). Given that teachers' attitudes about PD influence the effectiveness of PD initiatives (Torff & Sessions, 2009), top-down models of PD cannot be effective. Alternate models must be established and researched.

Effective Professional Development

Current research into models for effective PD subvert top-down models and support learning by creating active and engaging environments where teachers can openly exchange ideas and focus on supporting student learning (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). In these models teachers construct new knowledge and skills with one another and then use this information to improve student learning (Sawchuck, 2010).

Research behind successful models indicate that good PD has: (a) a content focus, (b) active learning and participation opportunities, (c) an emphasis on collaborative and team building activities, (d) coherence with other PD experiences, and (e) content delivered over time to include at least 20 hours of contact time (Desimone, 2011). In addition, effective PD provides teachers with experiences that: (a) are sustained and intensive rather than short-term, (b) are focused on content and standards enacted in classrooms, (c) promote active and inquiry-based learning opportunities, (d) support teacher collaboration, (e) support teacher leadership in PD development and implementation, (f) are enacted and integrated with daily school practice and culture, (g) reflect teachers' learning goals, and (h) reflect the school mission and reform goals (Elmore, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Wei et al., 2009).

These models align effective PD with a focus on teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions with teachers seen as part of a professional community (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). PD approaches are successful particularly when teachers are afforded time to plan for classroom implementation and when they are given support in the classroom (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). When PD meets the above expectations, a positive impact on children and their learning is more likely in addition to increased teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Wasik, 2010).

Several models have emerged in recent years supporting teachers' desires to take part in relevant and self-directed inquiry-based study. For example, in Personal Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers meet regularly to collaborate on content or problems they select as their PD

focus (Honawar, 2008). Flipped faculty meetings are another model emerging in practice where content is shared prior to the meeting so that meeting time can include more discussion and collaboration (Caramanico, 2013). A final model gaining recognition in school culture is the Edcamp Model.

The Edcamp Model

The Edcamp model provides one recent and increasingly popular approach to providing relevant and responsive PD. An Edcamp is often referred to as an "unconference" in that no pre-set agenda exists. Instead, the content of the Edcamp day relies solely on the participants establishing common foci to include technology integration, pedagogy, current issues and educational trends. The Edcamp model is a democratic and grassroots initiative reflecting constructivist ideals (Edcamp Foundation, 2012).

The first Edcamp was held in May 2010 in Philadelphia, and over 200 Edcamps have been held since that inception. The vision of the Edcamp Foundation is to "promote organic, participant-driven PD for K-12 educators worldwide" (Edcamp Foundation, 2012).

Edcamps possess certain shared attributes. They are free to all participants. There is no vendor or commercial presence, although Edcamps can seek sponsorship to pay for extraneous items like snacks and door prizes. Edcamps can be hosted by anyone interested in the Edcamp vision and mission and do not require the approval of the Edcamp Foundation. Sessions offered during Edcamp are determined the day of the event and do not have to take the form of formal presentations. Facilitators of the conference can pre-define a schedule for the day, and then assist participants in defining the sessions within that framework. Edcamp participants then engage in an ad-hoc community as they are called upon to lead or take part in conversations they define.

Participants attend sessions of most interest to them where they are considered as equal collaborators. Edcamps are reliant on the "law of two feet." This principle means that if a session does not meet the needs of the participant, the participant is encouraged to change sessions when and as they wish. That means session attendance may be fluid as participants may leave a session in the middle of the timeslot in order to seek out another session that may be more appealing to them in that moment. The underpinning philosophy of Edcamp is that the agenda that emerges the day of the camp is the only agenda that could have happened and is therefore the right agenda for those who attended (Boule, 2011).

Social media (i.e., blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook) can also be used to

highlight and to continue the work started the day of the camp (Edcamp Foundation, 2012). Additionally, collaborative technology may be a presence at the camp in the form of interactive connectivity and presentations (i.e., backchannels, twitter, polling sites, video rooms) (Hertz, 2010).

Method

This study depends upon a convergent mixed-methods research design using multiple methods to collect data based on the active participation of the researchers and the participants. The focus of this research is emergent rather than pre-determined as the researchers interpret the data (Creswell, 2002) related to the phenomenon of interest—in this case, teachers' responses to the Edcamp experience. As such, this analysis is a case study investigating a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context occurring in a specific time and place. Case studies draw from multiple sources of information in order to gain a full understanding of the studied event (Creswell, 2002).

The mixed-method approach to research is fundamentally interpretive and relies on the researchers to develop descriptions of the studied person or event and then analyze data for commonalities and insight. The data then yield patterns leading to theories as an emergent and unfolding process. Conclusions drawn from the data reflect findings, lessons learned, and continuing research questions to be asked (Creswell, 2002).

The mixed methods approach is thought to be pragmatic, responsive, problem-centered, and application-based (Creswell, 2002). This approach was deemed appropriate as this study focused specifically on the teachers' perceptions of and responses to PD.

Participants

Fifty-seven participants attended the first Edcamp held in the state (Arkansas), and another forty-two attended the second year of the camp. The participant demographic had more females (54%) than males (46%). Teachers came from a mix of teaching foci and backgrounds. In terms of grades participants were currently teaching, the distribution consisted of early childhood teachers (9%), middle childhood teachers (22.7%), secondary teachers (27.2%), K-12 teachers (9%), college instructors (9%), paraprofessionals (2%), and substitute teachers (5%).

Subjects taught by participants at Edcamp included: teachers of all subjects (5%), English Language Arts (18%), mathematics (20%), science (16%), social studies (2%), art (5%), business (5%), computer technology (2%), family and consumer sciences (2%), foreign languages (2%), music (5%), speech/communication (3%), curriculum specialist (2%), adminis-

trators (7%), and media specialists (5%). Participants had the following years of experience: less than 1 year (23%), 1-5 years (24%), 6-10 years (11%), 10-15 years (18%), and a substantial number who had taught for more than 15 years (24%). Finally, in terms of school context, participants worked in public school settings (75%), private school settings (16%), and in charter school settings (9%).

EdCamp Design

The hosting university was a mid-sized, public state school with an annual enrollment of over 11,000 graduate and undergraduate students, located at the center of the state and 30 minutes outside of the state capital and metro center. The university is the second largest producer of teachers and other school professionals in the state. Education faculty hosted the event within the College of Education (COE) building using all COE social media streams to advertise the event and elicit registrations (i.e., listservs to current students and alumi, facebook, twitter, webpage, district contacts, etc.).

As the day began, participants arrived at the hosting university where the Edcamp events took place. Participants were instructed to visit the session sign-in table to indicate sessions they would like to see offered at the camp, as well as sessions they felt they could facilitate. The event facilitators created the schedule for the day based on participant input. In all, 4 session times were scheduled through the day (2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon) with 4 workshop offerings per session.

The main event room was held open as a "spontaneous" gathering room in case participants wanted to form their own ad-hoc sessions. The day ended with participants reporting back to the main event room to take part in an "App Attack" where volunteers shared their favorite iPad or android app. Throughout the day, teachers tweeted, posted to social media, and posted in the site backchannel.

Measures

Data sources for this study include qualitative data pulled from the session creation process and responses pulled from open-ended prompts provided on the post-event survey. Quantitative data was pulled from the Likert-scale survey questions.

Session Creation and Selection. Upon arrival, participants were instructed to indicate on note cards topics for sessions they would like to attend and sessions they felt they could facilitate. Event facilitators created the schedule based on this input. These cards represent qualitative data yielding emergent PD needs' themes self-identified by the participants.

Qualitative coding of the session cards on the morning of the event happened very quickly in order to facilitate the agenda for the conference. One week after the event, both researchers re-coded the cards independently to verify the patterns and themes that emerged and to establish inter-rater reliability. The researchers then conferred with the goal of total agreement for each note card, concept, and category using joint-probability of agreement.

Post-Event Survey. The survey in this study examined teachers' reporting of their typical PD experiences as well as their response to the Edcamp PD model. The survey included both Likert-scale questions and open-ended prompts allowing for emergent input from the participants. The Likert-scale questions allowed for the calculation of descriptive statistics in analyzing the responses of the participants to the Edcamp experience. Survey approaches to research aim to provide quantitative description of attitudes or opinions of a sample population to the presented variable(s) by measuring the impact of a treatment (Creswell, 2002). In this case, the treatment was simple exposure to the Edcamp "unconference" model.

The survey included 17 questions, with the first five questions gathering demographic data about the participants. Questions six to nine examined participants' views of their prior PD experiences (district based offerings and professional conferences). Question 10 focused on participants' views of their districts' responsiveness to teacher input and needs in determining PD offerings. Questions 11 through 17 focused on teachers' responses to the Edcamp experience.

The survey was developed by the event researchers through a review of other tools available through research in the field. The primary source for the content and structure of the survey was the *Schools and Staffing Survey* (SASS) available through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2008/2012), specifically the *Teacher Questionnaire* tool from the survey set which examines teachers' perceptions of their own PD.

Additional content and structural elements were gathered from recent research conducted in the field to include a 2011 *ACT Research Report Series*—a study funded by a Gates Foundation grant. This study focused on teacher perceptions of online and face-to-face PD opportunities in four large school districts in the midst of school improvement initiatives (Allen et al., 2011). The *Teachers' Attitudes about Professional Development* (TAP) was also reviewed (Torff, Sessions, & Byrnes, 2005) as well as a survey developed by Yates (2007) based on principles of highly effective PD based on research gathered by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI).

The EdCamp survey was designed through an iterative process by

the researchers, who examined the existent surveys, pulled together a common question set, revised the question set to reflect the Edcamp vision, and then piloted and refined the survey over a period of two months. Content validity were established as well as concurrent criterion-related validity and relation to the *SASS Teacher Questionnaire* subset questions related to PD. The instrument's reliability was established via test-retest reliability at .90 based on responses of two test subjects.

Results

Session Creation and Selection

Based on participant input, the event facilitators created the sessions to fill the day's schedule with four sessions offered through four different time slots across the day. In coding the data from the session creation process, three primary categories emerged to encompass the topics identified by teachers for sessions at the Edcamp event (See Table 1). Sessions fell into a technology category; a category reflecting recent policy trends and issues to include standards, testing, and evaluation; and a third category of classroom strategies and support.

The technology category was the largest and included 11 of the 23 sessions hosted at the Edcamp event and 40.96% of attendance. The second category of sessions included standards, testing, and evaluation resulting in 29.54% of all attendance at the conference with 4 sessions. Finally, classroom strategies and support as a category resulted in 29.54% of conference attendance with 8 sessions.

Survey—Likert Responses

At the end of the Edcamp event day, participants were sent a link to the survey with a response rate of 73.7%. In response to questions six to nine, which asked participants' views of their own prior PD experiences, the majority of the teachers' reported that they had received their most recent PD (prior to Edcamp) from a variety of sources including: school district (30%), educational cooperative (12%), professional conferences (28%), continuing graduate education (20%), and other (10%) (e.g., self-study, personal learning communities).

The participants were asked to rate their perception of the general usefulness of their prior PD. They reported that the PD provided by their district was *somewhat useful* (69.6%) as opposed to *not useful at all* (4.3%) or *not very useful* (13.1%), although several teachers noted their district's PD as being *very useful* (13%). Conversely, participants' responses to their "other" PD experiences (co-op, conferences, graduate

Table 1
Sessions and Attendance

Session Topic	*Year*	*# of Requests*	*# of Attendees*	*Raw %*	*Relative %*
Technology					
Twitter (2 sessions)	Year 1	15	24	42.10	6.50
Digital Curation	Year 1	5	12	21.05	3.25
iPads in the Classroom	Year 1	0	9	15.79	2.44
Livescribe	Year 1	0	6	10.53	1.63
Kidblog/ Teaching Writing	Year 1 & 2	6	22	22.68	5.96
Technology Resources (2 sessions)	Year 1	15	35	61.40	9.49
Evernote	Year 2	3	8	20.0	2.17
Google Apps	Year 2	6	5	12.5	1.36
Virtual Schools and K-12 LMS	Year 2	2	3	.08	.81
E-texts and Digital Storytelling	Year 2	1	15	37.5	4.07
Technology and Math Instruction	Year 2	6	12	30.0	3.25
TOTAL: Technology					40.92
Standards, Testing, and Teacher Evaluation					
National Boards	Year 1	1	9	15.79	2.44
NGSS Science Standards	Year 1	3	12	21.05	3.25
Common Core/P.A.R.C.C.	Year 1 & 2	11	36	37.11	9.76
Teacher Evaluation System	Year 1 & 2	14	26	26.81	7.05
TOTAL: Standards, Testing, and Teacher Evaluation					29.54
Classroom Strategies and Support					
Classroom Management	Year 1 & 2	12	26	26.81	7.05
Diverse Learners/Cultural Competence	Year 1 & 2	8	15	15.46	4.07
Community and Parent Involvement	Year 1 & 2	7	23	23.71	6.23
Renewal and Teacher Joy	Year 1 & 2	2	19	19.59	5.15
Differentiated Instruction	Year 2	9	16	40.0	4.34
Assessment Strategies	Year 2	3	12	30.0	3.25
Teacher Efficacy and Leadership	Year 2	6	21	52.5	5.69
Dyslexia and Dysgraphia Strategies	Year 2	5	3	.08	.81
TOTAL: Classroom Strategies and Support					29.54

coursework) were more positive, with teachers rating these experiences as *very useful* (62.5%) or *somewhat useful* (37.5%) (See Table 2).

Participants were also asked about the topics they had experienced in their recent PD and the degree to which these topics supported their teaching. Participants were led to reflect on district-offered PD taken within the last six months to include the summer and fall prior to the October Edcamp experience. All participants reported having experienced district offered PD across the summer months in preparation for the new academic year. Participants had experienced some form of technology integration training over the last year (96%) as well as topics related to curriculum changes (Common Core, NGSS) (94%) and teacher evaluation (93%).

Survey question ten focused on participants' views of their districts' responsiveness to teacher input and needs in determining PD offerings. Again, participants were asked to reflect on district offered PD they had recently experienced. The strongest responses to this question set fell into the "no opinion" rating. Trends in the data indicated teachers felt that they could contribute ideas for traditional PD content (35.7%), were provided some choice in their own PD content (37%), and provided adequate time for teacher collaboration (44.4%). On the other hand, the participants reported that they were not provided input on the format

Table 2
Teacher Perceptions of their Professional Development Experiences

	% Not Useful	*% Not Very Useful*	*% Somewhat Useful*	*% Very Useful*
District Provided PD	4.3	13.1	69.6	13
Other PD (Co-Op, Professional Conferences, Coursework)	0	0	37.5	62.5

Table 3
Teacher Perceptions of School/District PD Responsiveness

	% Strongly Disagree	*% Disagree*	*% No Opinion*	*% Agree*	*% Strongly Agree*
Teacher input on content	10.7	25	28.6	28.6	7.1
Teacher choice of content	7.4	18.5	37	33.3	3.7
Time for collaboration	7.4	22.2	25.9	44.4	0.0
Teacher input on format/delivery	7.4	37	22.2	33.3	0.0
Teacher input on time for PD	7.1	32.1	39.3	21.4	0.0

or delivery of their prior PD (44.4%) or on time for PD offerings (39.2%) (See Table 3).

The next set of questions on the survey asked participants to rate their Edcamp experience. An overwhelming 93.9% indicated that they would attend another Edcamp. Participant responses rated Edcamp as being relevant (90.3%), as a viable means of updating professional knowledge (97%), and as a means to improve student learning opportunities (84.9%).

In terms of specific skills gained during their Edcamp experience, participants felt knowledge they gained at Edcamp would improve their teaching skills (87.9%), provided them with new strategies to employ (93.9%), and encouraged (or further encouraged) their use of technology (97%). Finally, in more affective domains, participants felt Edcamp encouraged them to reflect on their teaching (84.9%), renewed their enthusiasm for teaching (90.9%), and provided desired opportunities for collaboration (93.9%) (Table 4).

Participants' strong and positive responses to all the questions about Edcamp signaled that the day was very well received and was a positive experience. This finding was encouraging as it aligned with the research describing successful and effective PD (Desimone, 2011; Wasik, 2010).

Table 4
Teacher Responses to EdCamp

	% Strongly Disagree	*% Disagree*	*% No Opinion*	*% Agree*	*% Strongly Agree*
Edcamp was directly relevant to my teaching	0.0	0.0	9.7	38.7	51.6
Edcamp updated my professional knowledge	0.0	3.0	0.0	51.5	45.5
Edcamp will improve student learning opportunities in my classroom	0.0	3.0	12.1	39.4	45.5
Edcamp encouraged me to reflect on aspects of my teaching	0.0	3.0	12.1	36.4	48.5
Edcamp renewed my enthusiasm for teaching	0.0	3.0	6.1	36.4	54.5
Edcamp will improve my teaching skills	0.0	3.0	9.1	39.4	48.5
Edcamp encouraged me to use new strategies	0.0	0.0	6.1	30.3	63.6
Edcamp encouraged me to use new or increase my use of technology	0.0	0.0	3.0	30.3	66.7
Edcamp increased my opportunity for collaboration with colleagues	0.0	0.0	6.1	30.3	63.6

These findings support the Edcamp model as an effective PD model with high impact reflecting learner-driven, inquiry-based focus and structure (Honawar, 2008).

Discussion

The Edcamp "unconference" model was a viable source for examining the research questions regarding: (1) teachers' descriptions of their typical professional development experiences; (2) the professional development topics, issues and needs are being requested by teachers in one local context; and (3) teachers' responses to the Edcamp professional development model.

Standard Professional Development

In describing their typical PD experiences, the teachers in the Edcamp study reflected the national data in indicating that the majority of their PD came from district and cooperative led initiatives, followed by professional conferences, graduate education, and self-study formats (Akiba, 2012). Teachers' evaluations of their typical formalized and district-based PD experiences were lukewarm, with the majority of teachers describing their PD as somewhat useful, reflecting previous findings in the field (Desimone, 2011; Guskey, 2009; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012).

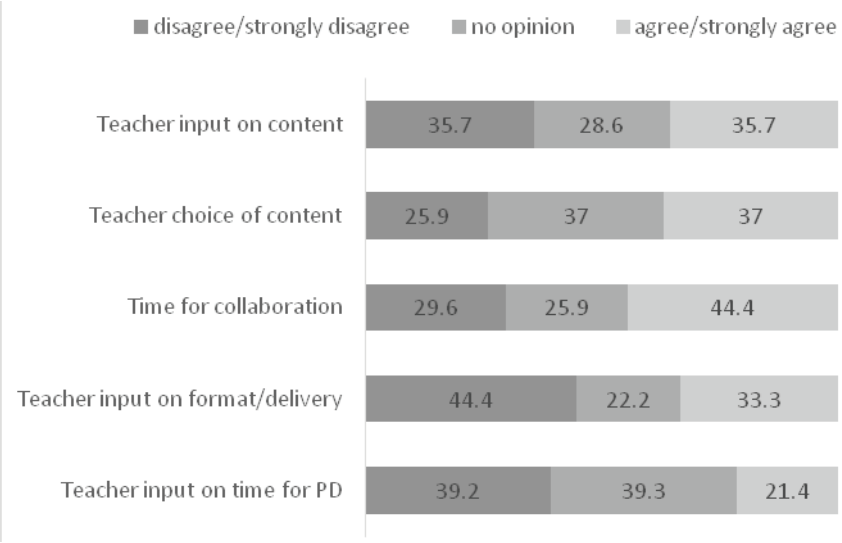
In contrast, teachers were more positive in reporting their experiences with other PD venues to include conferences, graduate coursework, and self-study. These venues were experiences sought out by the participants and thus more aligned with their self-identified needs.

Participants' responses to their ability to influence their PD in their districts were evenly distributed across the range from strongly disagree to strongly agree with participants feeling slightly more positive about their ability to influence content and collaboration, but slightly less positive about their ability to influence PD delivery format or PD delivery time (See Figure 1). This finding is aligned with the research base (Gusky, 2000; Torff & Sessions, 2009).

Ideal Professional Development

Participants in this study were clearly interested in learning more about technologies they could use to engage students (e.g., Twitter, Glogster, Edmodo, iPads, Kidblog, Livescribe) and technologies they could use to support their own instructional practice (e.g., Livebinder, digital curation, Evernote). The prevalence of these sessions reflects teachers' wishes to be technology savvy and to integrate more technology into their professional lives.

Figure 1
Teacher Perception of Ability to Influence District Provided PD



Participants also requested sessions on curriculum, standards, and testing to include information on National Board certification, the NGSS standards, the Common Core-based accountability assessment (PARCC), and the new state teacher evaluation system. Teachers' selection of these topics indicate a concern for upcoming changes in evaluation of their students as well as evaluation of their own instructional practice.

Finally, participants in the Edcamp were interested in discussing a range of classroom-based pragmatic topics ranging from classroom management, strategies for diverse learners, community and parental involvement, and renewal and teacher joy. These topics reflect a desire for teachers to continue to deepen and hone their craft in order to better meet their students' needs and maintain a focus on their students as the reason for entering the profession.

Edcamp Professional Development

The participants' responses to Edcamp were overwhelmingly positive. Participants' strong and positive responses to all the questions about Edcamp signaled that the day was very well received and was a positive experience. This finding was encouraging as it aligned with the research describing successful and effective PD (Desimone, 2011; Wasik, 2010). These findings support the Edcamp model as an effective PD model with

high impact reflecting learner-driven, inquiry-based focus and structure (Honawar, 2008).

Teachers in this Edcamp seemed particularly struck by the idea that teachers forming a professional community was a valid means of PD (24.2%). As one teacher commented,

> I enjoyed the intense discussions we engaged in as professionals. I appreciated the amount of time on task we experienced. Every discussion contained a gem that I will use in my classroom, which I cannot say I have experienced in my district-provided Professional Development.

Another contributed,

> Consider this opportunity for a future PD day at school. We're allowed choice, but not complete control.

These findings are supported in the research indicating teachers do desire active learning and participation opportunities where they have some control and where they can collaborate with others (Desmione, 2011; Wasik, 2010). Specifically, teachers' wishes to learn more about technology, classroom strategies and support, and current policies and issues indicated professionals who are concerned about being informed and current in their fields.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations in the study include the fact that participants self-selected for attendance and thus may have been biased to respond positively to the Edcamp experience. Additionally, the Edcamp model is one that is predisposed to the discussion of technology, technology usage, and technology integration. This may have been reflected in the participants attracted to the event and may have influenced the session creation process and responses to the survey. This Edcamp event represents a limited geographic footprint; however, the diversity of attendees does argue for a sampling representative of the profession as the participant demographics represented a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives and could be argued as representative of the larger education profession.

An additional limitation of the study lies in the survey construction. The survey could have been structured to ask parallel questions comparing Edcamp and other forms of PD experienced by the teachers. This would allow for more direct comparison of the teachers' responses to the Edcamp model when compared to more traditional PD experienced, including: district provided PD, higher education coursework, and professional conferences. Further studies of the Edcamp phenomenon (or other PD models) should seek to include such parallel construction.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the Edcamp model appears to be a powerful and viable option for teacher PD which allows the researchers to pinpoint the topics, issues, and needs at the forefront of teachers' minds. Teachers provided emphatic and positive responses to their experience in the conference day. Teachers came to Edcamp seeking inspiration, pragmatic information (strategies, ideas, information on policies and issues), opportunities to network and collaborate, and to regain control over their own PD. The Edcamp experience met these needs. Teachers identified the Edcamp model as notable for allowing collaboration and teacher voice and control. They cited the responsiveness of the model as a powerful support of their own PD in contrast to their lackluster rating of their own district provided PD.

In terms of the topics teachers identified as of most interest, the need for technology support was a dominant theme at the conference, followed by a desire to discuss standards, testing, and evaluation, as well as a wish to learn more about classroom strategies and support (management, diversity, community and parental involvement, and renewal and teacher joy). Empowering the teachers to openly discuss these topics did provide deeper insight into their unique concerns and insights. In other words, the Edcamp conference provided an exceptional opportunity to listen to the voices of teachers and in doing so to validate and sanction those voices.

The results of this study validate the concept that teachers can and should be empowered to define and implement their own PD as an alternative to the traditional district-based professional development models reported by teachers as being lackluster and impersonal. Creating professional development using a grassroots model can result in active and engaging professional learning environments that allows teachers to openly exchange ideas in support of student learning and their own professional renewal.

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