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Book Review: *Handbook of Professional Development in Education.* Linda E. Martin, Sherry Kragler, Diana J. Quatroche, & Kathryn L. Bauserman (Editors). New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2014. 562 pages.

Chin-Wen Lee
University of Northern Colorado

I discovered the *Handbook of Professional Development in Education* (the *Handbook*) when I was preparing for an evaluation project of a school district's professional development (PD). This *Handbook* is a joint effort of 50 professionals. I read the *Handbook* from the perspective of an external evaluator and looked for evaluation models and practices in Pre K–12 settings. I found some connections to my experience as a secondary education teacher, as well as what I have learned in Evaluation classes. The book served as a literature review source for my evaluation project. Above all, the *Handbook* sent me on a journey to find out more empirical studies on the effectiveness of professional development.

Part I—Professional Development, Past and Present (chapters 1–3): In these chapters the authors talk about changes in professional development regarding policy, trends, and conceptions. They also call for quality, research-based professional development and the use of technology in advancing professional learning opportunities.

Part II—The Complexity of Professional Development in Today's Schools (chapters 4–11): Part II addresses systems thinking for use in contemplating potential conversations among teachers, schools, communities, and policymakers. The introduction of sociocultural approaches challenges readers to think of their own philosophy of teaching and learning from the perspectives of adult learners.

Part III—Developing Solutions for Effective Professional Development (chapters 12–22): The authors of Part III cover elements to be considered in designing quality professional development, including characteristics of adult learning (chapter 12), teachers' efficacy beliefs and mindset (chapter 13), emphasis of content knowledge (chapter 19), standards-based professional development (chapter 20), and the use of external resources (chapter 22). In addition, readers will find approaches to better engage teachers in professional development (chapters 15 and 16) and enhance teachers' leadership (chapter 17). Roles of schools are not absent from this book. The authors emphasize the necessity of school-university partnership (chapter 18) and

school as a center of inquiry (chapter 21). The only chapter that seems incongruent to Part III is chapter 14, *Transforming Adolescent Literacy through Responsive Professional Development*. There is no clue about why the editors included secondary literacy in the discussion of finding solutions for effective professional development.

Part IV—Pulling It Together (chapters 23–25): A five-level evaluation on professional learning activities is introduced (chapter 23) along with a backward planning approach to assure accountability of those activities. The authors of the following chapter (24) discuss features of and factors to effective, sustainable professional development programs. The perceptual changes from in-service training to professional learning serves as a conclusion of this *Handbook*. Case studies are presented in the Appendix. Readers may particularly enjoy reading the stories from schools which support teachers' professional development.

Strengths

The authors begin each chapter with a list of key points and end with questions for discussion. Discussion questions are designed for three audience types: teachers, administrators, and policymakers. This design is helpful for self-study as well as conversations with PD stakeholders. For example, in the fields of special education and gifted education, it is critical to help *all* teachers understand how to better serve students with a wide spectrum of abilities. In chapter 25, Kragler, Martin, and Sylvester suggest administrators, "think about the role you play to support not only individual teacher's needs to learn but also whole-school concerns. Develop a plan to work *with* all your teachers" (p. 499), comments which led me to think of differentiated PD activities for teachers.

In my evaluation project, I made suggestions on the same type of activities so that they may be accessible to teachers of different fields and teaching experiences.

Second, the authors set forth the trends and issues of professional development in Part I. It is indispensable to recognize where we were, where we are, and where we are going before initiatives and conversations take place. In my grant writing practice, I learned that decreasing cognitive dissonance is key to create buy-ins of stakeholders (Bauer, 2011). For example, I would remember to incorporate professional standards into my evaluation proposal because standards-based PD activities are more persuasive in administrators' eyes than random actions. It is hard, but never peripheral, to use the language of people from different fields. Professionals should be aware of shifts of the language and mindsets.

Third, from an evaluator's perspective, I found chapter 23 the most valuable. Successful implementation and results cannot exist without good planning. Guskey reminds readers that the ultimate goal of teachers' professional learning is to improve student learning outcomes and that backward planning is important because "the decisions made at each level profoundly affect those made at the next" (p. 462). Thinking of student learning outcomes, and success indicators of those outcomes, is the first step, followed by determining factors to greater impact professional development, such as instructional practices, organizational support, knowledge and skills to implement instructional practices, and experiences that facilitate teachers' acquirement of needed knowledge and skills. I agree with Guskey that having backward planning in place at the very beginning stages of planning PD

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can make evaluation a natural part of administration and therefore "a basis for accountability" (p. 463).

Missing Pieces

Are there differences in professional development at different education levels (early childhood, elementary education, secondary education)? Mraz and Kissel (chapter 9) talked about professional development in early childhood education. They were thorough in elaborating four strategies, including literacy coaching, in-class mentoring, professional learning, communities, and web-based coaching. However, authors of chapter 10 failed to bring readers what the chapter title suggested —*The Design and Implementation of Effective Professional Development in Elementary and Early Childhood Settings*. Griffith, Ruan, Stepp, and Kimmel (chapter 10) presented the design of PD (i.e., a framework) and left out the implementation piece. Effective PD in elementary and early childhood settings is another missing piece. The principles Griffith et al. used in their framework, indeed, are applicable to various disciplines, but they are not specific to the needs of teachers of young learners. I raise the same question about Fisher and Frey's chapter on effective PD in secondary schools (chapter 11). I challenge their conclusion— "[E]ffective professional development for middle and high school teachers should be based on needs assessments and classroom observations" (p. 226). Again, needs assessments and classroom observations are keys to effective PD, but they are not specific to the needs of secondary school teachers. As a PD evaluator, chapters 9–11 did not help me understand differences for teachers at various grade levels in terms of professional learning.

Recommendations

The *Handbook* provides a comprehensive overview of professional development in education. How can we make the most of this book? From a learner's perspective, I will benefit the most from doing a project with a real audience, for example, writing a grant proposal with a gifted education coordinator for professional learning activities. While doing a real-world project, I will always come back to the *Handbook* to look for foundations and theories to support my rationale statement. I encourage readers to keep searching for the latest research studies on professional development beyond the information provided in the *Handbook*. In summary, this book is a resource for researchers and practitioners who are interested in professional learning activities for educators.

Chin-Wen Lee *is a doctoral student in the School of Special Education at the University of Northern Colorado. She can be reached at lee7391@bears.unco.edu.*

Reference

Bauer, D. G. (2011). *The "how to" grants manual* (7th ed). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.