

EDCAMP: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

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Abstract

The growth of Edcamp events since May 2010 has warranted a closer investigation of the way in which teachers experience these events. Over 100 events have been held to date worldwide, and many educators are bringing the model back to their schools and districts (Callahan, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe how educators experience Edcamp events when compared to the tenets of effective learning for professionals: learner-centered, assessment-centered, knowledge-centered, and community-centered (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000). These domains served as a framework to define educators' experiences at Edcamp events. There has not been any academic research on this topic to date. Thirty reflective blog posts were analyzed, coded, and themes were identified. The results indicate that Edcamp events are aligned with the tenets of effective professional development. The study responded to current trends and addressed a gap in the literature regarding the efficacy and value of Edcamp events.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Professional development for teachers exists as a serious problem. When citing the teaching strategies and principles that must be applied in classrooms, the authors of *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* state, “The point is particularly important because incorporating the principles in this volume into educational practice will require a good deal of adult learning. Many approaches to teaching adults consistently violate principles for optimizing learning” (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000, p.26).

Further, the Met Life Survey (2012) reports that low job satisfaction is linked to low quality professional development and reduced time for collaboration with colleagues. Given that satisfied teachers have better outcomes for students and stay in the profession longer, providing quality professional development is critical. As the available funds for schools decrease, the need for new ideas and models has become critical (Center on Education Policy, 2012).

Stigler and Hiebert (1999) cite the professional development opportunities offered to American teachers. “Compared to other countries, the United States clearly lacks a system for developing professional knowledge and giving teachers the opportunity to learn about teaching” (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p.6).

If we value student learning, then we also need to value professional learning for teachers. As Dufour and Marzano (2011) remind us, “School improvement means people improvement” (p.1). In May 2010, a group of educators in Philadelphia wanted to offer a

free professional learning opportunity for their colleagues. They launched the first Edcamp event. Since May 2010, there have been over 100 Edcamp events worldwide. Edcamp events are free, democratic, participant-driven professional development opportunities for teachers. However, there has been limited research or investigation on the efficacy of this learning model. This study sought to address this gap in the literature and provide practical advice to educators when planning professional development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe participants' experiences and determine if Edcamp events are aligned with the tenets of effective professional learning. The tenets, derived from *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (2000), include learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered.

Significance of the Study

Due to the recent growth of Edcamp events, there have been legitimate questions from the educational community about the efficacy and effectiveness of the model. This study is significant because the results will indicate if the Edcamp model is relevant and effective based on the tenets of how people learn.

Research Question

Are Edcamp experiences aligned with the four tenets of effective professional development: assessment-centered, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and community-centered?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are applied to the vocabulary used in relation to the context of this study.

Assessment-centered- professional development opportunities that provide teachers with feedback on their lessons and classroom performance (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000)

Community-centered- professional development opportunities that have continued contact and support as teachers incorporate new ideas into their teaching (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000)

Edcamp event- free, democratic, participant-driven professional development for teachers (Callahan, 2012)

Knowledge-centered- information that is provided in context for learners (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000)

Learner-centered- professional development opportunities that are selected or crafted by the learner (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000)

Open Space Technology (OST)- a group of people, given a purpose and freedom, have the ability to self govern, self-organize, and produce results (Boule, 2011)

Professional Development (PD) – ongoing learning opportunities available to teachers and other education personnel through their schools and districts (Education Week, 2011)

Unconference – a conference exemplified by its distinct lack of structure (Boule, 2011)

Summary

The growth of Edcamp events over the past few years warranted a close investigation of the value of these events. This study seeks to address a gap in the literature and provide practical advice to educators.

Chapter II

Introduction

The authors of *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000) states that professional development programs for teachers frequently:

- Are not learner centered.
- Are not knowledge centered.
- Are not assessment centered
- Are not community centered.

These problems with professional development are repeated throughout current literature on teacher learning. In her book, *Curriculum 21*, Heidi Hayes Jacobs stated that “States should reexamine professional development for teachers in light of the new global context” (2010, p.1737). By global, Heidi Hayes Jacobs emphasizes the need for a strong community system to accompany learning.

Dufour and Marzano (2011) stated that “Schools and districts must use professional development strategies that are specifically designed to develop the collective capacity of educators to meet the needs of students.”

It is clear that there is a need for new models of professional development that honor the following tenets of adult learning: learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered.

Edcamps Explained

Edcamp events are free, democratic, participant-driven professional development for teachers. Although Edcamp events can vary in size, length, and scope, all events have the following features:

- Free: Edcamps are free to all attendees. This helps ensure that all different types of teachers and educational stakeholders can attend.
- Non-commercial and with a vendor free presence: Edcamps should be about learning, not selling. Educators should feel free to express their ideas without being swayed or influenced by sales pitches for educational books or technology.
- Hosted by an organization or individual: Anyone can host an Edcamp. School districts, educational stakeholders, and teams of teachers have hosted Edcamps.
- Made up of sessions that are determined on the day of the event: Edcamps do not have scheduled presentations. During the morning of the event, the schedule is created in conjunction with attendees.
- Events where anyone who attends can be a presenter: Anyone who attends an Edcamp is able to be a presenter. All teachers and educational stakeholders are viewed as professionals worthy of sharing their expertise in a collaborative, respectful setting.
- Reliant on the “law of two feet” that encourages participants to find a session that meets their needs: As anyone can host a session, it is critical that participants actively self-select the best content and sessions. Edcampers are encouraged to leave a session that does not meet their needs. This provides a unique way of

weeding out sessions that are not based on appropriate research or not delivered in an engaging format

- Based on choice: Edcamps allow participants to choose any session or topic at any point in the day (Swanson, 2012).

Open Space Technology

Edcamps are events based on open space technology (OST). Open space technology is a belief that people can self organize, self govern, and produce results. It is based on the idea that the people who attend are the right people, the things that are learned are the right things, and the things that happen are the right things (Boule, 2011). This philosophy has been used to inspire many different types of unconferences and camp events, including Foo Camp, TeachMeet, Edubloggercon, and Barcamp.

The History of Edcamp

The first Edcamp event was held in May 2010 in Philadelphia. The model was inspired by experiences' that the organizers had at a Barcamp, a computer programming unconference in Philadelphia. Following the first Edcamp, a wiki was created at <http://edcamp.wikispaces.com> This space helped Edcamp events in other areas to organize. In June 2010, an Edcamp event was held in Charlottesville, North Carolina. Over time, new people began to contact the original organizers, and the idea spread. More events followed. By Spring 2012, over 100 Edcamp events had been held worldwide.

First Order and Second Order Change: Where Edcamp Falls

First order and second order change offer a perspective for viewing change and school reform. First order change does not contradict the established context of the “organization.” This type of change does not usually threaten people or make them uncomfortable. Second order change breaks from past practice and past values. It requires new resources and is often resisted strongly by members of an “organization” (Bartalo, 2012). Edcamps uniquely exist as second order changes. They require educators and attendees to completely break with past practice and past values regarding professional development.

The Teaching Gap: The Need for Active Professional Development

Stigler and Hiebert (1999) identified the gap between what we know about best practice in teaching and what actually happens in classrooms as a national crisis. They offer six principles for improvement, including: improvement as gradual and incremental, a constant focus on student learning goals, a focus on teaching, not teachers, improvement in context, improvement as teacher work, and the use of a system that evolves. Again, Edcamps are aligned with these six principles. The focus on teaching, encourage sharing of student work, and Edcamps are responsive to immediate teacher needs.

Stigler and Hiebert (2009) stated, “To really improve teaching, we must invest far more than we do now in generating and sharing knowledge about teaching. This is another sort of teaching gap” (Stigler and Hiebert, 2009,

Summary

The literature indicates that there is a need for new models of professional development. The Edcamp model, one which is based on open space technology, seeks to inspire second order change by creating democratic, active learning that is aligned to the tenets of effective professional development.

Chapter III

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe how learners who attended an Edcamp event felt about the experience as related to the four tenets of effective professional development: assessment centered, learner centered, knowledge centered, and community centered (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000).

Background and Significance

Teacher effectiveness is the single most important factor affecting student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001). To this end, high quality professional development for teachers is one of the most important ways that school leaders can improve student learning. However, many professional development experiences for teachers are not aligned with the tenets of effective adult learning (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000). This study seeks to describe Edcamp events, an increasing method of professional development for teachers.

Participants

A criteria sampling method was used to select 30 blog posts from people who have attended an Edcamp event (Creswell, 2009). The criteria sampling method allowed the researchers to select individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. Edcamp founders or Edcamp Foundation Board members were excluded from the participant pool. All selected posts were narrative and reflective in nature. All selected

posts were written by individuals who had attended at least one Edcamp event. An entire list of selected blogs follows the references section of this white paper.

Blog posts were harvested using Scoop.it!, an online aggregation service. The service combs several different search engines for blogs, news articles, and images that contain the word “edcamp.” Since the blog posts were published in the public forum for public consumption, consent was not required. However, the authors of this research contacted the blog authors to inform them of their inclusion. Any authors wishing to be removed from the study were accommodated.

Setting

The schools and universities from which the blog post authors were selected included a broad cross section of the education community in the United States. Urban, suburban, and rural settings were represented. However, suburban teachers were the most prevalent authors of the blog reflections selected from this study.

Research Question

The question proposed in this study coincided with previous studies outlined in Chapter 2, specifically the research presented in *How People Learn* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000). Each domain was selected based on the four tenets of effective professional development.

It is understood that experiences that include, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, learner-centered, and community-centered components support learning. However, Edcamp events have never been described, identified, and explored in a qualitative manner at the time of this study. This served as an integral component of the

study. The following research question was the foundation for the analysis of selected blog posts:

Are Edcamp experiences aligned with the four tenets of effective professional development: assessment-centered, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and community-centered?

The researchers selected narrative, reflective blogs in an effort to elicit responses that related to the four domains of effective professional development as defined by *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000). A formal standardized measurement was not used in this study.

Procedures

This qualitative study was a detailed examination of Edcamp events. A qualitative design was used because it adequately investigated participants' experiences related to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research inductively identifies nuances in contextualized human behavior, and that coincided with the purpose of the study.

In this study, the role of the researchers was observer. This defines the researchers as human beings who seeks to listen and observe the ideas of others given his or her prior experiences (Creswell, 2009).

Data Collection Methodology

The study engaged the researchers in a research and analysis procedure. First, Scoop.it was used to obtain appropriate narrative reflections. The responses of all participants were later examined and coded to determine emergent themes.

The intention of the interviews was to provide the researchers with experiences, perceptions, and ideas about Edcamp events.

Data Collection

The researchers must keep the meaning of the phenomenon, or the essential question, open and available while reviewing the subject. The researchers must mobilize subjects to reflect upon their experiences without becoming sympathetic to or involved within the experience (Van Manen, 1990). This philosophical lens allowed accurate and descriptive information to be selected and analyzed by the researchers.

Data Analysis and Emergent Themes

“Coding is not what happens before analysis, but comes to constitute an important part of the analysis” (Weston, Gandell, Beauchamp, McAlpine, Wiseman, & Beauchamp, 2001). The researchers must examine the data and determine how the data best fit into different categories. This can be done by asking questions about how and if the collected data contributes to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009).

For this study, a form of A priori coding was used (Gibbs & Gibbs, 2008). Each blog post was analyzed to determine if statements fit into one of the predetermined professional development categories identified (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000). These categories included assessment-

centered, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and community-centered. Within each identified category, the researchers identified additional codes and trends that sought to answer the research question at hand. Additional codes became necessary as themes emerged. All codes determined by the researchers were shared with colleagues and team members to ensure that the selected codes appropriately address the research question.

Coding was the initial step in the process. After all of the transcripts were coded, the information segments were physically placed into the same area as other information segments in their coded group. To manage the data and determine trends, a data base system was developed by the researchers using Evernote.

Risks and Potential Benefits to Participants and/or Society

The researchers believed that the potential risks of this research were minimal. The researchers did not believe that the risks of this research were greater than activities encountered in everyday life. While there may not have been direct benefits to the participants, this research may allow universities and schools to create more effective professional development opportunities in the future.

All blog authors were provided with notice of their inclusion, and any authors who wished to be removed from the study were accommodated.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to provide a thorough description of Edcamp events as aligned to the tenets of effective professional development. A conceptual framework identified (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino,

J.W., 2000) was used to guide the qualitative analysis. The research provided insight into the complexities of professional development for educators.

Chapter IV

Results

After all the appropriate blog posts were selected, the researchers used a form of A priori coding (Gibbs & Gibbs, 2008). Each interview transcript was analyzed to determine if statements fit into one of the predetermined professional development categories identified (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000). These categories included assessment-centered, knowledge-centered, learner-centered, and community-centered.. Within each identified category, the researchers identified additional codes and trends that sought to answer the research question at hand. Additional codes became necessary as themes emerged. A total of 12 themes emerged. All codes determined by the researchers were shared with a group of fellow doctoral colleagues to ensure that the selected codes appropriately addressed the research question.

Coding was the initial step in the process. After all of the transcripts were coded, the information segments were physically placed into the same area as other information segments in their coded group. To manage the data and determine trends, a data base system was developed by the researchers using Evernote.

The participant's quotes were sorted into themes based upon the research questions identified by the researchers. The themes were noted as the transcripts were analyzed, and quotes were assigned to an existing theme. If the quote did not qualify under an existing theme, a new theme area was created. There were 30 participants; therefore, there was a possibility for thirty comments on each theme. The participant

could also make additional references to the theme that counted as a response. The themes apply directly to one of the research questions. A description of the basis of the themes follows.

The research question was as follows: Are Edcamp experiences aligned with the four tenets of effective professional development: assessment-centered, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and community-centered? Themes related to the assessment-centered domain included:

1. *Instructional Design*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included identifying what made lessons “work” and how to implement learning strategies.

2. *Passion*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included the passion that teachers felt for learning something new.

3. *Surprise*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included the feeling that they had not anticipated the overall expertise of fellow participants.

Themes related to the community-centered domain included:

1. *Collaboration*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included ways that the participants worked together during the Edcamp event.

2. *Connections*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included the meeting of virtual friends and the making of new virtual friends through physical attendance at the Edcamp event.

3. *Like-minded*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included the meeting of colleagues who thought “like them” as compared to colleagues in their schools and districts.

4. *Group expertise*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included the belief that the group was wiser than any single individual.

Themes related to the knowledge-centered domain included:

1. *Tech tools*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included technology based learning resources.

2. *Instructional strategies*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included how participants learned to use tools and strategies in their classrooms.

Themes related to the learner-centered domain included:

1. *Active*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included the activity required of all the participants at the Edcamp event.

2. *Reflection*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included how participants were able to identify the topics on which they needed help.

3. *Accountability*

Aspects of this theme, as reported by the participants, included observations that teachers remained on task without administrative oversight.

Table 1 shows each theme, the domain to which is related, and the number of participant responses.

Table 1

Emergent Themes

Theme	Number of Comments
1. Surprise (assessment-centered)	6
2. Instructional Design (assessment-centered)	6
3. Passion (assessment-centered)	5
4. Collaboration (community-centered)	7
5. Connections (community-centered)	6
6. Like-minded (community-centered)	5
7. Group expertise (community-centered)	6
8. Instructional strategies (knowledge-centered)	4
9. Tech tools (knowledge-centered)	6
10. Active (learner-centered)	5
11. Reflection (learner-centered)	3
12. Accountability (learner-centered)	2

Assessment-centered.

Defined by *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000), assessment-centered is the dimension of professional development that includes the reception of feedback on one's teaching practices. The researchers selected quotes that best described the theme. The following are selective quotes from themes that were represented in the assessment-centered domain:

Theme: Instructional Design

Participant 2 stated: *I'm in the planning stages of doing some really cool research with my students, and it helped me to be refocused on the vital concept that students need to be central while designing the work for the upcoming project. Sometimes I get lost in how I would teach something instead of how students might want to learn it.*

Participant 4 stated: *Joining conversations demands that one express their opinions, beliefs, or experiences with a wide audience because talking drives action.*

Participant 5 stated: *Remember to always think about how what is being presented will help the students. If it doesn't help students, should we really be spending time on it?*

Theme: Surprise

Participant 1 stated: *There were many surprises within the faculty as to the level of expertise some teachers had developed because of a particular interest or demand.*

Participant 10 stated: *I was amazed, energized, and proud to be associated with educators who chose to spend a Saturday (most likely uncompensated) trying to find out how they can improve their practice and move education forward as discussed in the BOLD schools session.*

Participant 11 stated: *I've been talking about the power of the network for a long time (blah, blah, blah) but I'm not sure I really believed it until now.*

Theme: Passion

Participant 8 stated: *It was so inspiring to be around 100+ people who are passionate teachers.*

Participant 4 stated: *Passion is a huge factor in the individuals who participated in Edcamp Omaha.*

Participant 23 stated: *I think, at its most fundamental level, the Edcamp concept and format gives voice to the passion and energy that exists at the grassroots of this profession.*

Participant 15 stated: *Participants display an energy and enthusiasm that is contagious.*

Community-centered.

Defined by *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000),

community-centered is the dimension of professional development that includes continued contact as teachers incorporate new ideas into their teaching. The researchers selected quotes that best described the theme. The following are selective quotes from themes that were represented in the community-centered domain:

Theme: Collaboration

Participant 6 stated: *Isn't this the true definition of collaboration?...Leaders who get this are not only better for it, but can lead others to create communities of excellence.*

Participant 2 stated: *We jumped in and quickly found out that we were surrounded by people who understood, cared, and were genuinely interested in the kind of stuff most of us bore our friends with when we talk about work.*

Participant 9 stated: *The best things that a participant could bring would be a friend to bounce thoughts off of, as well as their ideas and questions.*

Participant 12 stated: *It is truly a magical experience to gather with some of the sharpest minds on the prairie (-ish), all eager to help and share.*

Participant 15 stated: *Throughout the day, participants introduce themselves to one another, reacquaint themselves with old colleagues and engage passionately in conversation.*

Theme: Connections

Participant 3 stated: *The third reason I am super excited about this is the connections that I make. They might be in person during the day, but they tend to be virtual after that.*

Participant 8 stated: *What was really special about Edcamp was how I got to meet many teachers I follow on Twitter and how I finally got to put a personality to my PLN (personal learning network) on Twitter.*

Participant 14 stated: *Then she asked another friend and before you know it, @--- and @--- and I were headed east.*

Theme: Like-minded

Participant 2 stated: *For some reason I had the sense that meeting “this kind of people” was going to be a significant part of what I would eventually take away.*

Participant 12 stated: *It’s not that all attendees all have the right answers, but Edcamp attendees still have a strong passion for this life that we’ve chosen and want so desperately to share it with other like-minded people.*

Participant 13 stated: *This then could be followed with your colleague telling you that their cat will be on fire that Saturday and they will unfortunately be unable to join you... even though you haven’t told them the date yet.*

Knowledge-centered.

Defined by *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000), knowledge-centered is the dimension of professional development that includes new information placed in an individualized context for the learner. The researchers selected quotes that best described the theme. The following are selective quotes from themes that were represented in the knowledge-centered domain:

Theme: Tech tools

Participant 17 stated: *For session two, I went to a presentation on mobile gaming. We learned about using Aris to create interactive, geolocated games.*

Participant 19 stated: *Here are the sessions I attended, all incredibly informative and useful in the classroom. ThingLink is a very cool way to tag pictures. I was able to play with this a little, tagged a photo in my blog (see below) and tag a photo and put it in Blackboard. Lots of potential for student use.*

Theme: Instructional strategies

Participant 20 stated: *I learned several ways that students can interact with their classmates and me outside of school to work on projects and ask questions.*

Participant 19 stated: *Rethinking student assessment seemed to be a pretty popular session with lots of discussion and questions.*

Learner-centered.

Defined by *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000), learner-centered is the dimension of professional development that includes the learner driving the selection of content and topics. The researchers selected quotes that best described the theme. The following are selective quotes from themes that were represented in the learner-centered domain:

Theme: Active

Participant 21 stated: *It is stunning to me that much of the PD world is presentation based leaving little or no time for teachers to talk. This is the value of Edcamp. It is all talk.*

Participant 24 stated: *The more traditional style (of professional development)-- in which a guest speaker is hired for a large sum of money and gives a presentation in a lecture hall – has it's place, but seems to be fading in popularity.*

Participant 26 stated: *I have heard more positive feedback on this day than any other PD I have ever been a part of. I keep wondering why we didn't take our PD in this direction a lot earlier. If we want classrooms where we are teaching students to be more collaborative and more proactive in their learning, don't we have to set up a culture where we trust teachers to do the same?*

Theme: Reflection

Participant 5 stated: *One comment that has come up more than once regarding teacher choice in PD, is that “teachers don't always know what they need for training.” While this is sometimes true when there is something new out in terms of research, techniques, technology, etc., teachers do know what area they want help in.*

Participant 27 stated: *When we allow students (in this case the educators) to explore the things that already have meaning for them and to wrestle together with each other, the learning that will take place will be immense.*

Theme: Accountability

Participant 21 stated: *It assumes that we are all professionals and that we won't wander into a discussion of “Housewives of Atlanta” (unless its relevant to the pedagogical conversation). Not only is it respectful of our dedication to and knowledge about our craft but it also holds us accountable to participate and*

lead.

Summary

To summarize the research, the participants were reflective in their responses to the Edcamp events. Questions were answered thoroughly. The researchers collected data to support the intent of the investigation and to answer the research questions.

Chapter V

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that Edcamp events are diverse, varied, and complex. The results were analyzed in response to each domain of professional development as explored within the research question: Are Edcamp experiences aligned with the four tenets of effective professional development: assessment-centered, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and community-centered.

Analysis and Implications for the Research Question

The research question required the researchers to consider the tenets of professional development and the methods of reflective expression for the participants. As the themes emerged, it became clear that there were 3 assertions relevant to Edcamp experiences. First, participants were highly motivated by the other participants in the room. Second, participants found a contrast between this event and other, more traditional professional development events they had attended in the past. Third, knowledge is defined as the sharing of practice.

Motivation Derived from Self-Selected Participants

Being as the individuals at the Edcamp events were self-selected colleagues, it created a high sense of community almost immediately in almost all cases. This was clearly reflected by the participants, and community-centered was the domain with the most comments. Community-centered had 24 comments, which indicated that almost every participant mentioned the strength of the community during the event. This translates to practice in our schools and districts. It suggests that we should allow

teachers to self select their teams and identify those with whom they would like to collaborate. This increases motivation and choice, enhancing the professional learning overall.

Participants Contrasted Edcamp Events to Prior Experience

Many participants indicated that an Edcamp event was somehow different from prior professional learning experiences. This suggested that the novelty and newness of the event could have generated some of the enthusiasm. It also suggested that there is a general dissatisfaction with professional development experiences in schools and districts. It is also important to note that the primary component of the experience linked to comments about the “differentness” of the experience were within the theme of active. This suggests that the active nature of the format is what separates it from past learning experiences and also generated positive enthusiasm from participants.

Knowledge Is Derived from Sharing Practice

Many participants indicated that the expertise in the room exceeded their expectations, and many participants also valued the sharing of practice. It is clear that the sharing of practice served as the “content” delivered at the Edcamp events. While this is a noted difference from most traditional professional development sessions, it does not make it less valid. Bartalo (2012) stated that sharing about teaching and lessons is one of the best ways to improve teachers.

Limitations to the Study

The study was conducted with a small sampling of the population. Only 30 reflections were examined although there have been thousands of Edcamp event

attendees. Participants were selected based upon their motivation to write and publicly publish a reflection about the event. This could skew the sample. The results of this study cannot be generalized to other populations.

Suggestions for Future Research

Specifically, a research study done with a random sample would serve to deepen the findings of this study. Researchers interested in expanding this brief study to a larger study with a random sample should contact the researchers.

Conclusions

Results of this study indicated that Edcamp events are aligned with the four tenets of professional development as identified in *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., Cocking, R.R., Donovan, M.S., & Pellegrino, J.W., 2000). From 30 brief blog posts, over 56 comments supported the tenets of assessment-centered, knowledge-centered, learner-centered, and community-centered learning. Although the format of Edcamp events makes it difficult to quantify how it impacts student achievement, it is clear that educators find the format as a way to increase their desire and motivation to develop as a professional. Given the Edcamp model is a second order change, it will likely encounter resistance from traditional educators. However, more passionate educators are certainly building blocks towards higher student achievement.

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Blog Posts Used in the Study

Participant 1:

<http://usedbookclassroom.wordpress.com/2012/01/28/whos-developing-whom-success-with-do-it-yourself-professional-development/>

Participant 2:

<http://teachinghumans.blogspot.com/2012/03/edcampcolumbus-reflection.html>

Participant 3:

<http://blog.discoveryeducation.com/blog/2012/03/16/energize-find-an-padcamp-or-edcamp/>

Participant 4:

<http://kristinapeters.wordpress.com/2012/03/27/ser-valiente/>

Participant 5:

<http://educationaltechnologyguy.blogspot.com/2011/11/professional-development-for-educators.html>

Participant 6:

<http://plpnetwork.com/2012/02/10/contagious-leadership/>

Participant 7:

<http://www.teachhub.com/pd-your-peers-exploring-edcamp-lisa-dabbs>

Participant 8:

<http://teachmethewayilearn.blogspot.fr/2012/03/why-edcamp-is-amazing.html>

Participant 9:

<http://www.good.is/post/edcamp-turns-teachers-into-grassroots-idea-hackers/>

Participant 10:

<http://edcampstl.wikispaces.com/2012+Evaluation>

Participant 11:

<http://edtechpower.blogspot.com/2012/03/from-dream-to-reality-making-things.html>

Participant 12:

<http://edcampomaha.posterous.com/why-i-need-edcamp>

Participant 13:

<http://pottsedtech.blogspot.fr/2012/03/health-hazards-of-edcamp.html?m=1>

Participant 14:

<http://dougpete.wordpress.com/2012/03/31/the-day-before-edcamp/>

Participant 15:

<http://aakune.blogspot.ca/2012/01/in-flow-at-edcamp.html>

Participant 16:

<http://ecologyofeducation.net/wsite/?p=3961>

Participant 17:

<http://techforteachers.com/teachertech/?p=125>

Participant 18:

<http://greenteamgazette.blogspot.com/2011/11/sothis-one-timeat-edcamp.html>

Participant 19:

<http://edtechhawkeye.blogspot.com/2011/11/reflections-on-edcampkc.html>

Participant 20:

<http://mat.usc.edu/recap-from-unconference-edcamp-harrisburg/>

Participant 21:

<http://wanderingandwondering.posterous.com/edcamp-model-perfect-for-pd-days>

Participant 22:

<http://plpnetwork.com/2011/03/07/unconference-revolutionary-professional-learning/>

Participant 23:

<http://www.cea-ace.ca/blog/stephen-hurley/2011/10/5/edcamp-movement>

Participant 24:

<http://www.macroeducation.org/the-media-of-edcamps-thoughts-on-twitter-google-and-mcluhan/>

Participant 25:

<http://chriswejr.com/2012/03/28/rethinking-the-traditional-conference/#.T3ST9VM8xD8.twitter>

Participant 26:

<http://www.patrickmlarkin.com/2010/09/professional-development-day-that.html>

Participant 27:

<http://www.geraldaungst.com/blog/2012/03/edcamp-as-pd-shifting-mindsets-part-2/>