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Pia Lindquist Wong, Ronald David Glass, eds. *Prioritizing Urban Children, Teachers, and Schools through Professional Development Schools.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009. 288 pp. $80.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4384-2593-1.

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Professional Development Schools as Agents of Change

The facts of life in urban schools today are an issue of equity, social justice, or lack of it. They are also a story of paradox, a tale in which children who are vulnerable and need the most receive the least from the very agencies charged with their education and development. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of funding, teachers who are less prepared than their counterparts in affluent areas: the list becomes more complicated with each added item.

For every problem, there may be a solution, however, and *Prioritizing Urban Children, Teachers, and Schools through Professional Development Schools* makes strong strides toward addressing them. This comprehensive and thought-provoking collection of essays paints a robust and realistic portrait of what progressive school reform can look like in a variety of urban settings, as well as the types of change that it can bring about. Its chapters are authored and coauthored by a wide group of individuals who were part of the Equity Network of professional development schools (PDSs) coordinated by the College of Education at California State University Sacramento over a six-year period, beginning in 2001. Running the gamut from scholars and teacher educators at the university level to classroom teachers, teacher candidates (student teachers), and school administrators, the authors are united by their commitment to the PDS model of a mutually beneficial triad relationship between students, teacher candidates, and classroom teachers. This relationship seeks to improve student learning by inspiring better teaching–to nurture "model practitioners" by providing teachers and candidates with opportunities to engage in ongoing, collaborative, and reflective work with university-level teacher educators (p. 10). The site-based structure of the PDS model results in deep relationships between professors of education and classroom teachers, relationships that begin to quell the longstanding "theory/practice debate" between the two groups (p. 192). As the book's authors demonstrate repeatedly, what emerges is a win-win-win situation in which professors become practitioners, and teachers become action researchers, and all stakeholders involved benefit significantly.

This compilation contributes uniquely to the field of the history of education. The editors' introductory and concluding essays, as well as those at the start of each section, provide solid historical, political, and social context for understanding the current U.S. school reform movement and the difficult place that urban schools occupy within it. But what emerges even more loudly from this volume are the voices of practitioners–whether they be scholars acting as coordinators, administrators, and liaisons to schools, or classroom teachers themselves–whose reflections on the process of participating in the PDS model are so detailed as to be instructive to readers seeking to replicate this model elsewhere. As such, this volume's most important function may be as an honest "how-to" guide for U.S. educators, administrators, and policymakers thoughtfully engaged in both the ground-up and top-down work of improving urban schools in the United States. Divided into nine chapters, the book reflects PDS work at twelve schools in five Sacramento-area school districts. The projects undertaken were wide ranging in their efforts to respond to the unique communities they served, and as a result, the perspectives and focuses of the essays vary greatly.

The editors bring thematic cohesion to the essays by organizing them into three sections, each consisting of three chapters. Chapters in the first section, "Toward Improving Urban Children's Lives," discuss how children become meaningfully invested in learning when curriculum responds to their local community and life experiences. The first section also details ways in which candidates in a teacher preparation program can support high-quality learning experiences for children while gaining pedagogical knowledge as future teachers. The second section, "The Power of Connections: Re-creating Teacher and Teacher Educator Roles," addresses how the PDS model transforms traditional school structures by redistributing leadership, responsibility, and an expectation of expertise across all school actors–classroom teachers as well as administrators–thereby encouraging teachers to become invested stakeholders in schools as well as frontline agents of change. Chapters 4 and 5 address the ways that this can happen through an innovative re-envisioning of a traditional teacher preparation program, which provided opportunities for both teachers and teacher candidates to take on new, empowering, and sometimes reciprocal roles as mentors and supervisors. Chapter 6 explores the changing role of university-level professors in such a program, who seek to contribute to the communities they serve (teacher candidates, teachers, and schools) in evermore relevant ways. In the final section, "The Politics of Transforming Institutions and Institutional Relationships," the authors relate the tensions that arise when two worlds meet in the PDS model–the "best practices" world of professors of education and the so-called real world of classroom teachers. Returning to the concept of the "theory/practice debate," the authors explore the politics of knowledge in urban school environments lacking the resources of time, staff, and materials. In such an environment, what type of knowledge is valued ("practical" knowledge of classroom management or "intellectual" knowledge of best practices), and who possesses it? While divergent perspectives among university-level teacher educators, administrators, and teachers led to tension in some PDS schools, schools that found unity did so by returning to the ultimate goal shared by all stakeholders: student learning.

Like many volumes of collected essays, *Prioritizing Urban Children, Teachers, and Schools through Professional Development Schools* occasionally suffers from a problem of repetition. Topics presented in the introduction crop up repeatedly in the individual essays, which careful editing might have removed. Additionally, editors Pia Lindquist Wong and Ronald David Glass's prose is so rich with specialized language that some of it becomes unwieldy; while such specialized language may aid Wong and Glass in communicating with an audience of scholars, it may, in fact, be off-putting to many practitioners who would benefit from this book. The problem of unwieldiness manifests itself in the book's title as well. The editors might have considered the following title, "Professional Development Schools as Agents of Change: Prioritizing Urban Children and Teachers," which pays homage to urban teaching as a social justice mission, a notion that editors and authors visit repeatedly but which is reflected nowhere on the book jacket.

A noticeable absence in the book is the lack of school administrators' voices, which pepper the pages only through a few anecdotes and sparse interviews. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the PDS model empowers classroom teachers to take on some of the managerial and supervisory responsibilities traditionally reserved for administrators. However, as those attentive to the current standards-and-testing movement are aware, public school administrators are held deeply accountable for the successes and failures of the school communities that they lead. Their in-depth perspectives would have enhanced the reflections in this book.

On the whole, *Prioritizing Urban Children, Teachers, and Schools through Professional Development Schools* offers readers a solid collection of insightful essays that shine light on the way forward while exposing the realities of urban public education. It is fitting that the voices of practitioners at all levels resonate from this volume as, ultimately, it is they who will be both agents of change and witnesses to it. Indeed, the message that a reader is left with is that engaged learning will take place when inspired, relevant teaching occurs and that the way forward is not a mystery. We see the path ahead, and it is not strewn with scripted, "teacher-proof" curriculum packages or an overabundance of standardized tests. Rather, it is marked by a dedication to time, relationships, and resources–by a view of teaching as creative, intellectual work–and by policy aligned with best practices.

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