Professional Development Research, a year later

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Three puzzles

- Teachers collaborating and actively engaged
- Focused on content and student learning
- Over time
- Coherent and aligned with relevant policies and practices

Puzzle 1: Design features

When tested in large scale, experimental settings, the principles do not always hold and there are not always significant effects on teachers or their students

But . . . .

While we are learning some things about how to design formal professional development opportunities, maybe we don't have a handle on the ingredients yet

So . . . .

- We also know that teachers learn in many different contexts, many of which are not designated as professional development and thus much more relevant research . . . . .
  - Network research
  - Preparing for NBPTS certification
  - Curriculum or assessment development
  - Comprehensive school reform
  - Teacher quality research (school leadership, for example)
  - During the school day . . . .

Puzzle 2: Professional learning

- Serendipity vs. intended
- Individual vs. collective
- Volunteer vs. mandated
- Learning what? Experience v. expertise
- Systems/ecological thinking

But . . . .

A focus on one thing can obscure/distort another

e,g., educator evaluation systems

And . . .

- We live in an age enamored with data and information
- "Research" is seen as objective and free from bias
- "Experience" is seen as subjective and biased

Puzzle 3: Research and experience

- This is, of course, a fallacy
- Research is values-driven, ranging from the questions we ask, the methods we choose, the instruments we use
- Experience is the bedrock of wisdom
- Teaching is not a science, although it can be informed by science

But . . . .

- We are losing out on the opportunity to tap into teachers' wisdom re: professional learning/development
- We are avoiding dealing with the fact that experience can both enlighten and blind

So . . . .

So what does all of this mean for the future of policy, practice, and research on professional learning?

- Puzzle 1: Design principles

- Puzzle 2: Learning is everywhere

- Puzzle 3: Research and experience

- We need more insight into the ingredients

- We need to more systematically enhance the work of teaching to be educative and study that

- We need to put experience back into the dialogue, but in ways that do so critically

- We need to interrogate the assumptions that are driving research

- Developing expertise
- Spreading expertise
  - Helping others learn
- Informing policy and program development

Teacher leading to what end?