

Looking to the Future: Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System for Adult Educators

A Publication of

Building Professional Development Partnerships
for Adult Educators Project

PRO-NET

May 1997

Mark Kutner
John Tibbetts
Pelavin Research Institute

Sponsored by:
U.S. Department of Education
Division of Adult Education and Literacy

Ronald Pugsley, Division Director
Jim Parker, Project Officer

INTRODUCTION

In *professional development*, practitioners are active participants in determining their own learning needs, and in designing and implementing appropriate learning activities. After being used almost exclusively by professors, doctors, attorneys, and the like in describing continuing education requirements for advance certificates or recertification, professional development is slowly working its way into the education arena. As it happens, this concept is especially suitable for the adult education field, which has long-recognized that practitioners' sense of ownership in their own professional growth is a key element in producing long-term effects on instructional behavior.

With the future structure of Federal programs supporting adult education services still uncertain, it is essential that alternative sources of support for professional development be identified so the field can be ready for all contingencies. If such funding sources are to be attracted, a professional development system that has broad-based support, and that can demonstrate its effectiveness, must be developed. By achieving consensus about what an ideal professional development system should "look" like, the adult education field will have both a goal to strive for and a model plan to present to state policy makers responsible for allocating funds and determining program priorities.

This paper, therefore, describes three components of such a professional development system (see Figure 1):

- ***An intergovernmental infrastructure*** supporting professional development.
- ***The availability and delivery of multiple professional development activities and approaches*** that are based upon the systematically determined needs of both instructors and programs.
- ***Ongoing evaluation activities*** that are an integral component of professional development services.

With expected policy and programmatic changes, it is essential to establish and maintain an intergovernmental infrastructure that can support and institutionalize professional development; and such an infrastructure should involve stakeholders from all levels of government, as well as from other service delivery areas. Furthermore, the objectives of professional development activities, specifically the competencies that instructors should possess, must be specified so that practitioners and decision makers will have a clear understanding of the intended outcomes of those activities.

FIGURE 1

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

An Established Intergovernmental Infrastructure	Availability of Multiple Professional Development Approaches	Ongoing Evaluation Activities
n Involvement of all stakeholders	n Conducting needs assessments	n Building an evaluation component into all approaches
n Marketing to and collaborating with other human service delivery areas	n Balancing instructor- and program-determined professional development activities	n Examining potential impacts of professional development on instructors, programs and learners.
n Competencies for adult education instructors	n Availability of multiple activities and approaches	

When professional development activities are planned, it is important to consider a variety of activities and approaches. Change in instructional behavior, after all, requires more than a single opportunity for instructors to participate in an activity or project. There is no single "best" approach to professional development. Rather, it is preferable for multiple approaches to be integrated in order to address the complex and ever-changing characteristics of specific program contents and instructor needs. In determining specific approaches to be used and the subject contents to be addressed, needs assessments are an essential mechanism for identifying individual instructor and program requirements.

An ongoing and systematic evaluation effort is a third essential component of a comprehensive professional development system. Since professional development is about change, the role of evaluation within a professional development system is not only to provide information about the impact of professional development, but to provide data for refining and adjusting professional development activities. Evaluation should, therefore, be built into all professional development activities—and appropriate questions need to be asked both to determine the effectiveness of such activities and to identify how professional development efforts can be improved.

The remainder of this paper discusses the key elements of each of these components.

**AN ESTABLISHED INTERGOVERNMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE
SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Federal policies supporting adult education are in a state of flux and to ensure continued support for professional development of adult educators there needs to be an established infrastructure within states to support those activities. Establishing and maintaining such an infrastructure requires the involvement of stakeholders from both state and local agencies; the development of plans and procedures for marketing to and collaborating with other human service delivery areas; and the establishment of competencies for adult education instructors upon which professional development activities can be based, and which also can inform evaluation activities.

Involvement of Stakeholders, Including Staff from the State, Professional Development Providers, and Local Adult Education Programs

Professional development does not occur in a vacuum; it requires the active support and involvement of individuals at the state level, at the level of professional development providers, and within local adult education programs. The participation by all of these stakeholders is necessary to ensure that effective professional development opportunities occur and that they benefit individual practitioners and improve the adult education program.

State-Level Support

It is at the state level where key decisions are made that will determine the structure and even the content of professional development activities for adult educators. To ensure continued support for professional development, even without a specific setaside for such activities, it is essential for states to take the following steps:

- n Allocate sufficient resources for professional development;
- n Monitor how professional development programs are meeting instructor competencies, and provide technical assistance to those programs having difficulty in meeting the standards;
- n Provide technical assistance to professional development providers and local adult education programs;
- n Develop and implement a plan for professional development with input from key stakeholders (staff, students, administrators), and revise the plan as necessary;
- n Prepare well-developed requests for proposals that encourage a variety of professional development approaches to meet both program and individual needs, and that require an evaluation of the impact of the professional development activities;
- n Recognize programs that demonstrate changes in instructional behavior resulting from professional development activities; and

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

- n Allocate sufficient resources for local programs participating in evaluations of professional development activities.

Professional Development Providers

Professional development providers also must be innovative in the ways in which they provide professional development, to ensure that the experience will be effective in adult education and useful in the new arenas in which adult educators will be working. Providers will have to assess the environment in which adult education programs operate, and design and fund professional development opportunities most suited to that environment and to the needs of instructional staff at local adult education programs. And, perhaps most importantly, they will have to be prepared to justify the use of funds to support professional development activities.

In short, professional development providers must:

- n Conduct need assessments and plan professional development activities based upon assessments;
- n Design professional development activities that include clearly stated objectives and that measure and incorporate an evaluation component;
- n Conduct professional development activities that involve multiple approaches and reflect both instructor- and program-determined needs;
- n Provide opportunities for practitioners to network and share ideas;
- n Monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of professional development activities; and
- n Use the results of evaluations to plan and improve future efforts.

Local Adult Education Programs

Program administrators play a key role in the professional development process, and their active support and involvement is essential for developing a state-wide system that is supportive of professional development activities. Administrators are instrumental in fostering collaborative leadership among professional development coordinators, practitioners, and other stakeholders, so that crucial decisions about professional development become a team effort and reflect multiple perspectives. Therefore, responsibilities of local adult education programs in supporting professional development should include:

- n Involving instructors in needs assessments;
- n Determining program-level information that should be reflected in professional development activities;
- n Developing a professional development plan for each instructor;

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

- n Creating a learning environment for instructors;
- n Disseminating information in a systematic manner about professional development opportunities;
- n Encouraging instructors to participate in a full range of professional development activities;
- n Providing release time or other opportunities for practitioners to engage in professional development activities;
- n Securing substitutes for classes or combining classes when practitioners are engaged in professional development activities;
- n Discussing professional development opportunities with practitioners and providing recognition and praise for practitioner involvement;
- n Fostering the development of learning communities to enable practitioners to learn together and share their knowledge base; and
- n Facilitating and supporting evaluation efforts by the professional development providers.

Marketing to and Collaborating with Other Human Service Delivery Areas

Policy makers are increasingly interested in a more integrated service delivery system involving new governance structures, organizational goals, and program outcomes, especially as closer relationships are formed between the adult education system and other agencies. Professional development agencies must not only be proactive in their collaboration efforts, but they also should undertake active campaigns to market their services to other human service delivery areas—including employment training, family literacy, welfare—and to other learning environments, such as business and industry.

Plans for professional development of adult educators must reflect a changing policy environment, including new opportunities for professional development's growth and improvement, the development of new systems that will support adult education, and a redefinition of programmatic goals, which will shape the content and delivery of professional development. To survive and prosper, professional development agencies must encompass programmatic and curricular changes that prepare practitioners to deliver services to an increasingly diverse learner population and in a variety of settings. The challenge for professional development agencies is, then, to establish new market "niches," to provide services that are useful to other providers, to demonstrate effectiveness, and to influence those people who make programmatic and funding decisions.

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

Professional development agencies interested and willing to develop new market niches and to actively market their services to different agencies also should consider the following issues and factors. First, they must determine if there is a *sufficient demand* for professional development services from the agencies who are believed to be "customers." Second, a determination needs to be made as to whether professional development agencies possess (or have a reasonable expectation of having the potential for possessing) an *adequate supply* of professional development services. Third, potential consumers of professional development agencies should have sufficient information about the types of professional development services available, especially information about *price, quality, and content*.

Essentially, professional development agencies interested in marketing other human service delivery areas should develop a marketing plan that involves the following components:

- **Identify** potential "customers" for professional development services through a key audience analysis and through specific types of professional development activities that are of most interest.
- **Conduct** an analysis to determine the specific benefits of professional development services for different types of agencies.
- **Develop** a logo and standard publication format for the professional development agency.
- **Prepare** brochures and marketing materials.
- **Provide** a distribution list.

Competencies Upon Which Professional Development Activities Should Be Based

State requirements for adult education instructors generally take the form of certification in elementary or secondary education. Similarly, if professional development activities for adult educators are to succeed in changing instructional behavior and produce improvements in the literacy skills of learners, they must reflect the skills and knowledge base necessary for adult education instructors to succeed.

To accomplish this objective requires more than simply participating in a certain number of professional development activities or completing a required number of hours, neither of which ensures that new skills and concepts have been mastered or will be used. Rather than using "seat time" as an indicator of professional development, it is more appropriate to measure competencies attained as a result of these activities. Yet, what the adult education field lacks is a set of clearly stated and commonly accepted competencies that a "good" adult education instructor should possess.

As demonstrated by the experience in the elementary and secondary education system, attaining a credential or advanced degree does not necessarily measure or guarantee an instructor's competence. Based on that experience, establishing certification or credentialing for adult educators is

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

not necessarily the answer to development. Rather, it would benefit the field to identify specific competencies (e.g., skills and areas of knowledge) that instructors should possess, as opposed to basing competence on seat time in professional development activities.

Although the adult education field lacks a clearly stated body of competencies by which to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities of instructors, recent literature on adult education practices and adult learning theory offer some areas of consensus on the kinds of generic competencies that mark an effective instructor. For example, the *Study of ABE/ESL Instructor Training Approaches* (the national staff development project preceding *PRO-NET*) generated field- and research-based information regarding the broad areas of skills and knowledge needed by adult educators, and incorporated this information into 10 widely disseminated instructional training packets.¹

Several states also have identified competencies for their adult education instructors and have published documents outlining state-wide competencies. The following are illustrative of such activities:

- *Minnesota's* expectations for adult education instructors are outlined in a brief document entitled, *Teaching Principles and Competencies for the Minnesota Adult Educator*. These 10 principles and their related competencies are based upon principles adopted by the Minnesota Board of Teaching and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in 1994.
- *Kentucky*, through a DACUM process conducted in 1993, developed a *Competency Profile of an Adult Basic Skills Instructor*, which delineates more than 60 tasks that teachers should be performing in the areas related to instruction, counseling, administration, and so on. A draft report prepared by Kentucky's Credentialing Advisory Board in the spring of 1996 formalized the standards and content proficiencies that would be tied to the credentialing process.
- *California* has disseminated several documents through 353-funded projects that address instructor competencies: (1) *ESL Handbook for Adult Education Instructors*, drawn from TESOL and CATESOL resources, as well as a chapter outlining the qualities associated with effective ESL instructors; (2) a summary of the Teaching Improvement Process (TIP); (3) Model Standards for Adult Basic Education; (4) an Amnesty Education Program Review; and (5) Integration of Program Leadership and Instructional Improvement. CASAS also developed a form for observing instruction of adult educators that overlaps many of the competencies identified in the research literature and in other states.

Additional states are in the process of developing similar kinds of guidelines, including Alabama, Connecticut, Indiana, and Missouri. For many states, however, performance guidelines for instructors are informal, voluntary, and not clearly defined. However, there remains a great deal of

¹ The 10 packet topics include: *The Adult Learner, Planning for Instruction, Team Learning, Monitoring Student Progress, Volunteers and Teachers in the Classroom, Communicative ESL Teaching, Mathematics: Strategic Problem Solving, Whole Language Approach, Improving Thinking Skills for Adult Learners, and Learning Disabilities: Learner-Center Approaches.*

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

interest within the adult education field for determining a set of competencies or skills that instructors would be expected to possess.

Drawing on state efforts, *PRO-NET* developed a preliminary list of competencies that should be possessed by adult education instructors, which incorporate generic competencies adopted from SCANS (*Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills*), as follows:

- n Communicating and Collaborating
- n Maintaining a Knowledge Base
- n Organizing Instruction
- n Managing Resources: Time, Materials, Space, People
- n Continuous Monitoring and Assessment of Learning
- n Understanding and Evaluating Systems and Relationships
- n Understanding Classroom Guidance Function

MULTIPLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES BASED ON SYSTEMATICALLY DETERMINED NEEDS

A dedicated staff committed to improving the quality and effectiveness of adult education services is an essential requirement for improving learner outcomes, and can only occur when instructors and other staff actively participate in developing and implementing program improvement initiatives. For that reason, there must be professional development opportunities that allow for staff to participate in developing, recommending, and implementing strategies for improving services. Staff also must have the opportunity to become acquainted with administrative concerns and suggestions; and a comprehensive professional development approach must include opportunities for program-determined activities in addition to self-determined activities.

Conducting Needs Assessments

Professional development activities must be based upon the systematically identified needs of instructors, and not simply upon an administrator's *perception* of what instructors at their program require. That a needs assessment should be the foundation of all professional development activities cannot be overstated. An effective needs assessment instrument raises the level of individual and programmatic awareness concerning: (1) areas for improving instruction; (2) individual learning preferences; and (3) preferred approaches to professional development. Instructors should have a strong voice in identifying the skills and knowledge areas on which professional development activities are to focus, as well as the types of professional development approaches in which they choose to participate.

Data for needs assessments can be obtained in a variety of ways, including interviews and written surveys. Administrators also should be consulted during the needs assessment process. With the high turnover rate among instructors, many may not have a sufficient breadth of exposure to adult

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

learners to understand exactly what their needs are or what the alternative professional development opportunities are for addressing them. Hence, when conducting needs assessments there should be a combination of the following:

- n **Self-report** responses to inquiries (the simplest form of needs assessment) about the individual's perception (usually of their own development needs). These responses are most useful as indicators of interest, and are limited by awareness of possibilities and of one's own needs. If used, inquiries should be made as specific and as brief as possible. Data should be combined with other sources.
- n **Focus groups** gather in groups of 8 to 12 persons, and produce primarily subjective data from a cross-section of respondents. This approach is useful as an initial step for identifying broad interests. Responses are to carefully formulated questions (usually only five or six are recorded). The skill of facilitators and recorders are critical; and quantification of data is usually inappropriate, because of the subjective nature of the data.
- n **Nominal group process** requires five to nine well-informed participants who write answers to specific questions. As participants share responses, group members rank-order or rate those responses. The result is a quantitative component that can be aggregated. This procedure works well with large groups divided into small, nominal groups. Nonetheless, data are subjective.
- n **The Delphi method's** purpose is to reach consensus on needs. A panel of "experts" respond to a series of questionnaires, each based upon the previous questionnaire—and each one becomes more specific. Responses are based on opinions. This procedure avoids the need to meet; it can be conducted by Fax, E-mail, or regular mail. The process is complete when the most common agreement occurs.
- n **Key informants** are leaders in a field who are knowledgeable about some group, and who share their perceptions. This process can provide information to be used later for more formal needs assessments. Data are often gathered by telephone or by in-person interviews; and questions usually focus on educational programming.
- n **Supervisor evaluations** are based upon a knowledge of the field and an opportunity to observe personnel in action. Information may be accurate, if individuals can avoid filtering perceptions through their own preferences or relationships to the person being observed; and data are usually more accurate, if a performance appraisal instrument is used. Likewise, the results are more valid and reliable, if corroborated by several observers.
- n **Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews** are the most common methods of needs assessments. The advantages of surveys and questionnaires are that they can target large audiences, can serve as marketing tools, and can build ownership. Their value depends upon the quality of the instrument (well-constructed and pilot tested) and on the sincerity and knowledge of respondents. Likewise, results of interviews depend upon the skill and sensitivity of the interviewer, plus the care taken in constructing

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

questions and in the follow-up process. There is real potential for bias, if the interviewer is not trained.

Because adult educators are most often part-time and have a high level of turnover, they are likely to resent completing needs assessment forms unless they can see some immediate benefit. Needs assessments, therefore, should be conducted only when there is a real reason to do so, and when some type of clearly described and useful follow up will take place as result of the assessment.

At the same time, the rapid turnover of staff may, indeed, generate one of those reasons for conducting needs assessments. If there are indications that the organization's mission is not being satisfactorily accomplished, and the reasons are not clear even though staff turnover is high, a formal needs assessment may be in order to determine accurately where the gaps are and the possible reasons those gaps exist. The needs assessment can serve two purposes: to make new staff more aware of the organization's mission and to target professional development needs to close the gaps.

Another appropriate time to administer a needs assessment is when new program changes are imminent. For example, an agency may desire to start a new family literacy program. It would be important to determine what gaps in the organization's mission will be filled by that program; what knowledge and experience about family literacy programs, if any, already exist among the staff; what the interests are of instructors for participating in such a program; and what resources the staff see as essential to making the new program a success. To continue the same example, if such a program were initiated, it would be appropriate to administer a follow-up need assessment shortly after the program has been implemented, to determine emerging needs for professional development, resources, logistics, and the like.

When an intervention is complete or fully implemented is another appropriate time for a needs assessment, to answer those evaluation questions raised during planning and to allow for further development, dissemination, and revision. In short, needs assessments should be on-going at those junctures when data are needed to evaluate progress or to determine the success of an endeavor. Examples might be a needs assessment of students to gather information for the evaluation of instruction; assessment of staff to provide data for the evaluation of professional development; or the need to gather data to evaluate curriculum or program development.

Balancing Instructor- and Program-Determined Professional Development Activities

A comprehensive professional development plan includes opportunities for a balance between activities supporting self-determined learning needs and preferences and those supporting program enhancement goals. *Instructor-determined* professional development allows instructors to select topics and approaches that are best suited to their individual learning styles, and is based upon the premise that adults desire to be the origin of their own learning, controlling the determination of the "what, who, how, why, when, and where" of possible learning experiences.

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

Self-determined learning, while necessary to ensure that instructors have the opportunity to identify topical areas of interest to themselves, may not always be congruent with program-enhancement efforts, as *program-determined* professional development activities have a more organizational dimension and are generally targeted to improving instructional services, correcting a program deficiency, or implementing program changes. These activities also offer instructors the opportunity to become acquainted with administrative concerns and suggestions.

Creating a balance between self-determined professional development and professional development for program enhancement raises the following important questions that must be answered:

- n *If self-determined professional development is the driving philosophy, how are individual needs and learning preferences balanced with organizational goals?*
- n *If the program goal is to improve services, must all professional development be mandated to ensure that instructional staff have the same requisite skills and knowledge base to support the changes mandated by program enhancement efforts?*
- n *Where do individual needs and personal preferences come into play in program enhancement efforts?*
- n *How is a vision created for professional development that incorporates organizational goals and self-determined needs and learning activities?*

Availability of Multiple Activities and Approaches

A comprehensive professional development plan offers adult educators different approaches and a series of activities for their professional development. Professional development opportunities also should consist of a series of activities, so that instructors have the opportunity to reinforce their knowledge and skills— and "practice" what has been learned in an instructional environment.

Four approaches which have been around for years, although not always frequently used in adult education, are:²

- n **Workshop/Presentation**, which fosters acquisition of new skills and knowledge through participation in singular or sequential training workshops, conferences, seminars, and summer institutes.
- n **Observation/Feedback** in the form of mentoring, peer coaching, and supervision, provides practitioners with data and feedback regarding their performance.
- n **Inquiry/Research** requires practitioners to reflect upon questions regarding their daily practices in a systematic, intentional manner, over time, and involves many different

² PRO-NET has published the *Professional Development Resource Guide for Adult Educators*, which details these four approaches.

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

types of practitioner-led activities, including study circles, action research, case studies, and curriculum writing.

- n **Product and Program Development** involves practitioners, generally in a collegial manner, in such processes as curriculum development, program design, or the redesign and enhancement of program quality.

Workshops/Presentations are often a first step in the professional development process, particularly if the purpose is to raise awareness among participants about new ideas or strategies, including other professional development approaches. There is, however, no "single best" professional development approach, and, ideally, several approaches should be used together. By incorporating different approaches into one professional development system, instructors have the option of selecting the experience they believe most suitable to their learning styles, the skills they want to develop, and the knowledge areas they want to learn about.

It is important to note that these approaches are not mutually exclusive, and in terms of application, some approaches have several steps in common. Both Inquiry/Research and Product and Program Development begin, for instance, with the identification of a *need* or a *problem*. Several approaches involve job-embedded learning, requiring practitioners to accumulate and build upon their knowledge about the teaching and learning process (by exploring issues and concerns in their own working environments). The Workshop/Presentation approach may be the vehicle for introducing practitioners to the other approaches—or it may be used as the first step in professional development for refining skills or for exploring concepts.

ONGOING EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Essential to effective professional development are ongoing and systematic evaluation procedures that focus upon changed instructional practices resulting from such activities. Few efforts have been made to evaluate the results of professional development beyond the brief responses requested at the conclusion of workshops that assess participant reaction to the session. It is an especially critical time for the adult education field to emphasize the evaluation of professional development for at least two reasons:

- n Given the possibility of diminishing resources and the certainty of competing priorities, the luxury of unfocused and unexamined professional development no longer exists, as increasing participation and financial support by non-educational partnerships are bringing to adult education new demands for accountability; and
- n If adult education practices are to respond to rapidly changing technological and social structures, professional development is the primary vehicle for meeting that challenge,

since sound information is needed to make thoughtful decisions on how to change directions.

Evaluation efforts are both program- and cost-effective. The must-ask question is: *Have the behavior of instructors changed and student learning been enhanced as a result of the professional development opportunities that have been provided?* Simply participating in a certain number of professional development activities or completing a required number of hours does not ensure that new skills and concepts have been mastered or will be used. Competency is demonstrated when instructors can incorporate new skills into their own classrooms.

Figure 2 shows how evaluation relates to professional development activities, and how it can inform continuous program improvement efforts by staff from professional development agencies and state and local adult education programs. As shown by this figure, evaluation data are used in all stages of the professional development process, including planning, implementing, reviewing, and revising professional development activities. The framework emphasizes that evaluation is continuous, rather than a single event that occurs at the end of professional development activities, and implies that time is required before professional development activities, can be expected to succeed.

FIGURE 2

Evaluation as Part of an Ongoing Professional Development Process

Building Evaluation Into All Professional Development Activities

Although the research literature consistently identifies evaluation as a critical component in the delivery of professional development to adult education instructors, it is currently a weak link. Evaluation, to be effective, needs to be incorporated within all aspects of professional development activities, starting with the initial state-level planning for professional development, itself. The field must move beyond what is referred to as the "happiness quotient,"—evaluation based on whether participants liked a professional development activity—toward more substantive evaluations, and consider such questions as:

- n How can evaluation components be built into professional development activities?*
- n What types of evaluations are most appropriate for different professional development activities?*
- n What constitutes the short and long term evaluation effects?*
- n How can the data gathered through the evaluation be used to improve the program?*

Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System

The best way to ensure that evaluation is incorporated within all aspects of the professional development process is to develop an evaluation plan that serves as a "roadmap" for the entire evaluation. Components of such a plan include: (1) determining evaluation objectives, audiences for the evaluation, and evaluation questions; (2) identifying the evaluation strategies to be used; (3) determining the evaluation methodologies; (4) determining required person and fiscal resources; and (5) establishing a time frame for collecting and reporting data.

Examining Potential Impacts on Instructors, Programs, and Learners

Evaluations of professional development activities must document changes in instructors, program services, and, ultimately, impact on student learning. As professional development has its most immediate and direct impact on instructors (since they are the principal target of the activities), evaluations should address three areas of instructor impact: instructors' reaction to the professional development experiences; their acquisition of knowledge and skills gained from the experience; and changes in instructional behavior resulting from their experiences. These aspects build upon one another.

For professional development to have an impact on learners, the activities must not only influence instructor knowledge and behavior, but must bring about actual changes to programs. A single instructor learning and implementing better techniques for cooperative learning will not sufficiently change the program to influence learners. New instructional behaviors require institutional support and broad implementation of changed instructional arrangements, to make a real difference. For this to occur, program administrators also must be supportive of instructors' efforts, and must be willing to make changes that accommodate innovations to the program. Specific program changes should, then, depend on the topics of the professional development services. Although much of professional development focuses upon changing instruction, other program process, student assessment methods, and student supports can be targeted for change, and should, therefore, be examined as part of professional development evaluations.

At present, assessing the impact of professional development on student outcomes, including learning, is an almost completely ignored component of professional development evaluations. This neglect is almost entirely due to the inherent difficulties of measuring student impact and the difficulties of determining whether any observed change is due, in fact, to professional development. Broad evaluations relating professional development with learner outcomes can be conducted, although the resources necessary to measure learner impact of professional development is currently beyond the capacity of most programs. However, programs should begin addressing the basic issues that need to be considered in evaluating professional development's impact on learners, including learner: (1) reactions to new content and approaches (e.g., student feelings, emotional reactions, and values; (2) acquisition of knowledge and skills; and (3) changes in student behavior (e.g., doing things they couldn't do before). States should consider providing professional development

providers and local adult education programs with the funds and technical assistance necessary to assess learner impacts.

SUMMARY

The future viability of a professional development system for adult educators requires the field to actively examine the manner in which professional development currently is offered, and to take steps to modify and adapt what is being done by state staff, professional development providers, and local adult education programs. Stakeholders from all levels of government, as well as other service delivery areas, should be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development activities. Professional development agencies should be proactive in their efforts to market to and collaborate with other human service delivery areas. Also, professional development activities must be related to a specific set of competencies that instructors should possess—and be based upon a systematically conducted assessment of instructor and program needs. These activities should include a balance between instructor and program-determined priorities.

There is no single "best" approach for professional development, therefore, multiple approaches should be available to instructors—preferably different approaches that complement one another. Incorporated, as well, within all professional development approaches must be an evaluation component that provides information both to inform the continuous improvement and to assess the effectiveness of services. Professional development evaluations should document impacts on instructors, programs, and student outcomes. In fact, evaluations should be considered first when planning for professional development, and not simply as an "afterthought." To ensure this occurs, a plan for evaluating professional development evaluations should be developed.