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## Perceived Inservice Needs of Omaha Catholic Elementary Teachers

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Perceived Inservice Needs  
of  
Omaha Catholic Elementary Teachers

A Field Project  
Presented to the  
Department of Educational Administration  
and the  
Faculty of the Graduate College  
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Educational Specialist  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by  
Stephen L. Kleinsmith

April, 1988

UMI Number: EP74046

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FIELD PROJECT ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree Educational Specialist,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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April 19, 1988  
Date

J.M.J.

Dedicated to the late Dr. Jack Lee,  
former Omaha Public School principal and dear friend.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of a thesis such as this can occur only with the cooperation and encouragement of family, friends, and colleagues. I would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of those who made this project possible.

I am especially grateful to the teachers of the Omaha Catholic elementary schools who participated in responding to the questionnaire. Thanks also to all the principals and to former Catholic School Superintendent Sister Mary Ann Gschwind for their support.

Special thanks go to Dr. Katherine Kasten, associate professor of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, for her magnificent support and assistance. Thanks also to Sue Ronk for doing some of the tedious proofreading associated with this project.

I would also like to recognize Michele Laurent who is my hero and role model as an educator. Throughout his life he has improved the lives of many young people by caring about them and sharing himself with them.

Finally, my warmest and sincerest appreciation go to my mother and father, Barbara and Gerald Kleinsmith, who have raised me with the words of Bruce Barton in their minds:

"If you can give your son only one gift, let it be enthusiasm."

S.L.K.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Background

It is widely recognized in the field of education that a four year teacher education program is but a minimum prerequisite for entry into the teaching profession. Teachers need to continue to develop professionally throughout their teaching careers. Staff development activities are seen as a vital means of ensuring that practicing educators are exposed to new techniques, programs, and other innovations, and are given assistance with classroom-related and subject-related areas of concern (Pansegrau, 1984).

Staff development can be defined in several ways. Dale (1982) states that "staff development is the totality of educational and personal experiences that contribute toward an individual's being more competent and satisfied in an assigned professional role" (p. 31). Sparks (1983) says it is "any training activity that attempts to help teachers improve teaching skills" (p. 72). Flynn (1985) defines staff development as "helping people grow in concepts, attitudes and skills that build the institution to its 'highest destiny'" (p. 20). In this research, staff development includes all those activities sponsored or recognized by the school district that help employees do



their work better and with greater satisfaction.

Staff development programs are often a mixed bag of speeches, workshops, and inservice meetings. In order for a staff development program to be relevant and productive, it must make for a positive change within the professional environment (Arnold, 1980). Different procedures bring about different changes. An example of this is the inspirational speech often used at the beginning of each school year. Speeches such as these may bring about attitudinal changes. Other methods of effective staff development include but are not necessarily limited to professional reading, classroom visits, demonstration teaching, role playing, and lectures.

For staff development to be successful it must be an ongoing process. In addition, the most effective staff development plan is a development plan prescribed for the individual educator. Growth throughout a school district is therefore a cumulative outcome of individual growth plans unique to personal needs and conditions (Olivero, 1976).

Zencke (1976) indicates that growth experiences in staff development programs should be individualized for teachers. If growth experiences are to be meaningful, lasting, and important, they must be chosen by the learner, and not be imposed by someone else. Zencke feels

that staff developers and staff members must agree on the objectives in order for them to meet the needs of the individual staff members.

Staff development programs are most successful when the goals, objectives, and methods are relevant to staff needs. If meaningful behavior changes are the objectives, staff development must focus on areas where the staff perceives the need for improvement. To increase the perceived relevance, staff development needs can be identified and a program planned by reviewing improvement through self-assessment activities. Leslie (1982) indicates that meaningful professional development is more likely to occur if those who are to grow are included in planning and decision making. Teachers need to be involved in their own professional development.

### Problem

It is clear that staff development is an essential component of the teaching profession. It is also strongly indicated in the literature that each teacher should be given a role in choosing those areas of individual concern in order for that teacher to grow and learn most effectively.

In large public school districts, there are supervisory personnel in central office positions who are responsible for planning and implementing a variety of activities for

all teachers within the district. There is a central office system which coordinates activities, and there is funding from the tax payers (who are concerned about the quality of education children are receiving). However, Catholic schools in both metropolitan and rural areas are faced with a challenge in providing quality staff development activities because many of these private schools have small staffs of twenty or less and work with limited budgets.

The most important question to be answered is what do Catholic elementary teachers perceive their inservice needs to be?

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of Catholic school teachers in the area of elementary teacher inservice activity. Based upon the data collected, the researcher should be able to make suggestions on activities to be utilized, in regard to teacher inservice, and what role the administrator might take in planning staff development activities. In addition, suggestions for the Archdiocesan Office about the role it might assume in regard to inservice activities will be presented.

#### Significance

The significance in researching the needs of Catholic elementary teachers in regard to inservice activity is that

it may improve the quality of education being provided in the Catholic schools. Teachers may become more skilled in their profession as they participate in staff development activities which they have identified as important.

In addition, by conducting a study on the inservice needs of Catholic elementary teachers, administrators of these private schools will be given feedback on how well the present inservice activities are meeting the needs of their teachers. It may affirm that the present inservice activities are adequate. On the other hand, it may give insight into what direction elementary teachers in Catholic schools would like to see inservice activities going; also, it may provide ideas on what methods of inservicing that the teachers feel are most worthwhile.

One final area of significance lies in the number of students who are being educated in the Omaha Catholic elementary schools. These 10,000 students are in a setting that is unique from the public school system because the students are given religious instruction based upon the doctrines of the Catholic Church. More research on Catholic schools specifically may be something considered for the future to assist practitioners in the Catholic school systems.

#### Assumptions

In looking at the present system of implementing staff development activities for Catholic elementary teachers, this

researcher believes that current practices are inadequate. Significant numbers of the teachers have indicated dissatisfaction with current practices and have expressed this to their administrators. Through conversations with other Catholic school administrators, it was discovered that staff development activities are currently haphazardly and infrequently planned and many times do not address issues and concerns of interest to the teachers.

There are several areas which are common to all Catholic elementary schools. All the schools provide religious education based upon the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The schools employ certified teachers who must meet and maintain professional competencies in the same way as public school teachers. Core curriculum subjects such as reading, math, language arts, science, and social studies are taught daily in all the schools.

When faced with the multiple problems of providing meaningful and yet inexpensive inservice activities for these teachers who vary widely in age, experience, and educational background, Catholic school administrators are often at a loss to determine priorities so they can address the entire staff's needs.

By asking these teachers to identify their inservice needs, it is clear that this researcher believes that teachers are in fact qualified to identify, plan, and

execute their own inservice activities.

Identifying areas that are common to all Catholic elementary schools means that it is assumed that individual schools would be willing to work together in a collaborative effort to improve the present system of inservicing teachers.

### Limitations

This study is based upon data collected in Catholic elementary schools in Omaha, Nebraska. The Catholic schools in this study operate in a de-centralized diocesan system with no central office mandating policy. The Catholic schools' central office operates in an advisory capacity only. Other schools in other dioceses in different regions of the country may have strong, centralized leadership from the Church; the generalizability to other Catholic schools across the country and around the world is questionable.

### Definitions

Staff development - all those activities sponsored or recognized by the school district that help employees do their work better and with greater satisfaction.

Staff developer - that person who is responsible for planning, executing, coordinating, and evaluating staff development activities.

Inservice activities - improving skills; implementing curricula procedures; expanding subject matter knowledge;

planning and organizing instruction; and increasing personal effectiveness.

Inservice methods - those practices and techniques used to present inservice concepts to teachers. These include but are not necessarily limited to lectures, demonstrations, role playing, micro-teaching, peer coaching, and professional reading and discussion.

Catholic school - an institution of learning that implements religious education based upon the teaching of the Catholic Church, and which is approved by an official action of the State Board of Education.

Interest group - any group that involves itself with the school's wellbeing.

De-centralized diocesan system - schools which are associated loosely based on their commonality of religious education, but which have no formal organizational chart with a chain of command as found in most school districts.

## CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

Staff development and teachers' inservice needs are areas of education that have been widely researched, and there are numerous papers as well as descriptive articles in the professional literature to draw upon for a knowledge base. Most of these published papers are nonempirical in nature, and they cannot serve as a data base from which testable theory might be induced.

Because this research focuses specifically on the needs of teachers in Catholic elementary schools, the literature was first reviewed to find background and data relevant to the professionals in these parochial schools. No empirical studies were found; therefore, papers pertaining to teachers' needs in general (not solely Catholic teachers' needs) were researched and reviewed.

Strother (1983) and Sparks (1983) each synthesized the research conducted in the area of staff development. Strother's conclusion was that the research could be classified in three ways: surveys, which were objective, data collecting methods used for a frame of reference in staff development; also, governance studies which examined the decision-making structures in staff development. These studies attempted to determine whether greater teacher involvement in planning and organizing inservice activities



produced greater personal satisfaction or program improvement. The third category was research in training to determine to what extent the inservice activity was actually incorporated into the classroom.

In Sparks' synthesis he described staff development as a "nested process" (p. 65) that included goals and content, the training process, and the context. The research was reviewed based upon these factors, and Sparks emphasized studies on the process or delivery systems of staff development and how it affected teacher change and improvement.

This researcher focused on two areas of research in staff development. The first area included the studies of effective models of staff development which have been proposed. The second area looked specifically at needs assessment as an integral component of an effective staff development program.

#### Effective Models

Wood, McQuarrie, and Thompson (1982) conducted a survey nationwide that showed strong support for a model of staff development termed RPTIM (Readiness, Planning, Training, Implementation, and Maintenance). Experts in the area of staff development believe that this model provides a framework for designing effective staff development programs.

Each of the five stages is defined by a set of practices to be completed in the stage, as well as identifying the personnel who make decisions for each stage.

In the readiness stage, a positive school climate is developed, current staff development practices are assessed, and goals are written. The principal and central office staff are primarily responsible for this part of staff development.

In planning, the teachers and administrators share the responsibility of checking resources for inservice activities and writing specific objectives for individual teachers as well as entire faculties.

The participants in the training phase are responsible for implementing their goals. The teachers choose the activities that they prefer to meet the stated objectives.

In implementation the principal actively supports efforts of the teachers to make changes in their professional behavior.

In the final stage--maintenance--both the teacher and administrator monitor the new practices to see that they continue and become stronger.

The results of this study showed strong support for all practices in the model, and the researchers concluded by stating the approach has face validity. The next area of research to be explored is to determine what really works in

school settings based upon the model.

Loucks and Zigarmi (1981) described a Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) which focused on individual change. They postulated that the change process consists of four general phases: Orientation and Preparation, Implementation, Maintenance, and Refinement. They went on to hypothesize that certain kinds of staff development activities may be more effective than others if a new technique or innovation in education is going to be introduced successfully and utilized in a school district. These researchers also stated that teachers must continuously give input as to their progress and needs if the changes are to be successful. Their conclusion was that school improvement can be successful if staff development activities are designed according to the needs of the participants.

In 1985 Thompson and Cooley surveyed all 50 states to determine the perceived importance and the current practices of ongoing outstanding staff development programs (as identified by the Chief State School Officers). They found that school districts which had successful staff development programs conducted needs assessments, involved their teachers in planning activities, developed program objectives, matched practices and procedures to the needs of the participants, and engaged in follow-up and evaluation of

staff development programs.

Korinek, Schmid, and McAdams (1985) identified 14 "best practices" (p. 33) statements and three inservice types in a review of literature on effective staff development programs. The three kinds of effective programs are those which transmit information, those that assist a teacher in skill acquisition, and those that bring about changes in the teachers' behaviors. According to the authors, effective programs are those in which preselected goals are accomplished. Therefore, attention should be focused on the goals because they determine which of these types of inservice should be used.

#### Needs Assessment

There have been a number of studies conducted by Marshall and Caldwell in the area of needs assessment in staff development. In 1982, they published an article that identified four approaches to staff development. These approaches were termed smorgasbord, central office, teacher centered, and school improvement. What is of interest to this researcher is how the needs of the teachers were identified in each approach. In the smorgasbord approach, no needs assessments were made. In the central office approach, surveys which reflected community and administrative concerns were utilized. The teacher centered approach made use of interviews and informal discussion, and with a school centered approach a multi-step process in which

needs are translated into goals was described. The authors concluded by stating that the school centered approach was the only model which met the definition of a true staff development program.

In a later study (1984), these same researchers looked at needs assessment more specifically to determine whether informal needs assessment (interviews and discussion) or formal needs assessment (surveys) procedures are more valid to plan and implement staff development programs.

Marshall and Caldwell's conclusion as to which method should be used was that it was dependent upon the purpose for the assessment. Both are equally valid, but informal needs assessment provides more in-depth information about individual teachers, and formal needs assessment gives general information that is sufficient for the initial planning of inservice programs.

In 1984 Pansegrau collected data to determine teachers' perspectives on inservice education. Field research strategies--interviews and observations--were utilized rather than a survey method. The study revealed that teachers classify inservice education into four groups of activities: mandatory, formal inservice education offered with a compulsory program change (such as adoption of a new textbook series); other types of mandatory, formal inservice activities (teacher conventions or professional development

days); formal inservice activities of a voluntary nature (lectures or coursework at a university); and non-formal inservice activities (discussion with other teachers, professional reading, supervising a student teacher).

Pansegrau found that school systems traditionally put their money, time, and energy into organizing structured, formal inservice activities, and have virtually ignored teachers' involvement in non-formal activities. Conversely, it appears that teachers are obtaining more knowledge and practical ideas for their classrooms for the informal activities they engage in. Pansegrau's conclusion was that if teachers are to be the beneficiaries of inservice education, their perspectives should determine the nature of inservice education.

A number of studies which surveyed teacher's views of staff development were found in the research.

Holly (1982) interviewed 102 teachers in Michigan and found that they valued self-chosen, informal, participatory activities that allowed them to work with other teachers. These teachers named several areas of staff development that needed improvement including being allowed to give input into program planning, being given more choices of activities, and being allowed more time for teacher-to-teacher sharing.

A study conducted by Iwanicki and McEachern in 1984

again stressed the importance of self-assessment to identify staff development needs. Once teachers have identified their needs, they should be forwarded to a staff development committee comprised of teachers as well as supervisory and administrative personnel. This committee's role is to prioritize needs for the school, and to plan staff development activities consistent with these needs. The committee must keep in mind that it should try to identify some needs common to a majority of teachers and others specific to the needs of particular departments, teams, or small clusters of teachers. Then (depending on the resources available) activities can be planned which utilize a variety of staff development methods.

Moore and Hanley (1982) conducted a needs assessment survey with 600 elementary teachers in both urban and rural settings. Their findings indicated six areas where help was needed. They included developing effective learners and a mastery of the basic skills; guiding children to set up and achieve realistic goals; locating materials and inservice support for more effective teaching; establishing and maintaining discipline; identifying and understanding readiness factors that affect learning; and motivating children to learn.

A final study by Marshall, Maschek, and Caldwell (1982) examined the stability of teachers' inservice needs. They

administered the Teacher Skill/Interest Questionnaire (TS/IQ) twice in a 15-month period to over 700 teachers to rate their skill, knowledge, and level of interest in 30 general areas related to education. They found that in general the priorities of teachers remained constant, but individual teacher's responses showed considerable variation. Their findings suggest that assessment of teachers' inservice needs in general areas (such as discipline techniques) is stable enough to allow for long term planning without repeating the assessment. However, if the inservice training programs are designed to meet an individual teacher's needs, assessment should be repeated annually.

### Conclusions

The research differentiates staff development into several stages which can be clearly defined. Needs assessment, whether it be formal or informal, is an essential component of effective staff development programs. The approach which is utilized depends upon the goal of the needs assessment. If an individual teacher's needs are to be met, informal methods of needs assessment should be used. For a school's or district's goals to be achieved, needs assessment must be done with a formal methodology. For purposes of this study, a formal needs assessment strategy will be employed in the form of a survey.



### CHAPTER III

#### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In order to address the questions of teachers' inservice needs in Catholic elementary schools, this researcher chose a sample survey research strategy. This method of research is of a nonexperimental or ex post facto nature.

Stone (1978) lists several advantages to this research design: samples can be generalized to a defined population; results are accurate with large sample sizes; random sampling reduces sample bias; data collection occurs in natural settings; data is obtained directly from the respondents; surveys yield data that suggest new hypotheses; and the cost is relatively low.

There are some disadvantages to utilizing the sample survey in research. Stone lists the unwillingness of people to respond; the highly structured formats of surveys that force people to categorize themselves in ways they might not fully agree with; and the nuisance variables that are difficult to control (p. 135).

#### Materials

In constructing a questionnaire that would be comprehensive and provide data for reliable conclusions to be drawn, samples were solicited from educators around the state. The director of the Nebraska Department of

Education's staff development office sent samples. In addition, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Assistant Superintendent of the Fremont (Nebraska) Public Schools provided sample questions. The final format of the questionnaire was approved by faculty in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (see Appendix A - sample questionnaire).

The responses for each question were based on a Likert-type scale using the number 1-5 with one being "Not Important" and five being "Very Important". The teachers responded to the way in which they perceived teacher inservice education should be practiced in the schools. There were twenty-two questions to be answered.

#### Subjects and Procedures

Based upon the low response rate of a questionnaire used by the Archdiocesan Broadcasting Council, a different strategy was devised for the distribution and return of the questionnaire used in this research in April of 1987. The procedure was as follows:

The names of 35 Catholic elementary schools in the metropolitan Omaha area were put together in alphabetical order. Then each grade (Kindergarten through eighth) was listed on a piece of paper. Four grades per school were randomly selected for a total sample of 140 respondents.

After determining which grades were to be sent

questionnaires, each questionnaire and a self-addressed envelope was designated to "Teacher of Grade \_\_\_\_\_". All the questionnaires and envelopes going to the same school were then inserted into a large envelope with a letter to each principal (see Appendix B) explaining the questionnaire. In addition, the principals were given a verbal explanation of the survey at an administrator's meeting. If there was more than one teacher per grade level, it was left to the principal's discretion as to which teacher would complete the survey.

On the back of each questionnaire the researcher coded the grade level. When the questionnaires were returned (116 for an 82 percent return rate), the researcher transferred the teachers' answers onto computer tally sheets, and then took them to the computer center at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The data were aggregated in three ways: by the grade level taught--primary (K-3), intermediate (4-6), and junior high (7-8); by highest educational level the teacher had attained--bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree; and by years of experience in education--1 or 2 years, 3-9 years, and 10 or more years. (Only one respondent had attained a doctoral degree; therefore, the researcher did not consider this to be a valid sampling for this research, and this analysis was omitted from the survey results.)

The grade level category was chosen because the researcher believed that teachers of primary grades may have different inservice needs from teachers of intermediate or junior high age students due to the stages of development the children are at in these age groups.

The educational level the teacher had attained was believed to be significant because this researcher hypothesized that people who have taken the initiative to go back to school may have also developed a positive attitude about the value of ongoing inservice activities. Teachers who had received master's degrees may be experts in whatever area of education the advanced degree was attained. Those teachers who have a bachelor's degree would not have had the opportunities through their education to become "experts" in education. These teachers should be "hungry" for more education--the education that inservices may provide.

The final category was the years of teaching experience the respondents had. Those with only a year or two of classroom experience will have different staff development needs than the more seasoned teaching veterans. On the other hand, teachers who have been in the classroom for 10 years or more may be "in a rut". These teachers are in need of fresh ideas and activities to revitalize their teaching repertoires.

The number of respondents who indicated "Important" or

"Very Important" for each question were summed up. This number was divided into the total number of respondents to obtain a percentage for each question in the table.

## CHAPTER IV

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The survey results are shown in Table 1. The data were categorized in three ways: by the grade level taught, educational level the respondent had attained, and by years of experience in education.

The results were analyzed by each of the three categories separately to determine how teachers felt their needs should be met according to the grade level they taught, the educational level they had attained, and their years of experience in education. In addition, each item was analyzed to determine if there was a significant overall result that teachers believed to be true notwithstanding the grade level taught, the educational level attained, or the years of experience in education. A question by question analysis was made.

Some of the more significant results are as follows:

The first question the teachers responded to was "Share with others common interests and concerns." Seventy-one percent of the first or second year teachers felt this was important, but over 90 percent of the more experienced teachers (3 or more years) felt it was important.

Question number three was also significant. Only 68 percent of the teachers of intermediate grades (4-6) felt it was important to discuss their teaching with colleagues

as opposed to 81 percent of the primary teachers (K-3) and 88 percent of the junior high teachers (7-8) who believed it was important.

The fourth question the teachers responded to was "The inservice activities should provide opportunities for individual schools to plan and conduct inservice activities." Seventy-five percent of the primary teachers and 73 percent of the intermediate teachers responded that this was important or very important, whereas the junior high teachers had 58 percent respond that it was important or very important.

The next question that had relevance was number six: "Teachers should have opportunities to experiment with different teaching methods." Ninety-four percent of the first or second year teachers felt it was important, but only 75 and 76 percent of the teachers with 3-9 years of experience, or those who have taught 10 or more years believed it was important.

Questions 8 - 13 were important because of the very high or very low responses "across the board." In other words, the responses in all categories--primary, intermediate, junior high, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, or years of experience--was very strong by all teachers.

"Teachers should become aware of the latest teaching techniques and materials" brought a 92-100 percent positive

response from all the teachers.

"The inservice activities should grow out of the needs of the teachers" elicited strong positive response from all teachers: 94-98 percent of the teachers believed this was important. The teachers also responded in a strong positive fashion to the eleventh item: "The inservice activities should grow out of the needs of the individual schools." Responses ranged from 88-100 percent. Conversely, the teachers believe it is not important for the inservice activities to grow out of the needs of the Archdiocese. The response to this item ranged from 41-59 percent in all categories.

Item number 12 - "Administrators should have primary responsibility for identifying the teachers' inservice activities" was not important to the respondents. Percentages ranged from 24-47 percent.

The response to question 13 "Teachers and administrators should work cooperatively in planning and execution of inservice activities" was very positive: 93-100 percent of all respondents believed this was important.

The fifteenth item shows relevance when comparing teachers with bachelor's degrees to those with master's degrees. Sixty-eight percent of the teachers with bachelor's degrees believe it is important to work on individual projects as part of the inservice program. Only



41 percent of the teachers with master's degrees feel this is important.

Should the inservice program be based on specific objectives: When comparing primary teachers to intermediate and junior high teachers, a difference in responses is noted. Only 63 percent of the primary teachers thought it was important, but 90 percent of the intermediate teachers and 96 percent of the junior high teachers thought it was important.

Item number 21 "More teacher inservice time should be provided for the staff" is significant to this researcher when comparing those teachers with bachelor's degrees and those with master's degrees. Fifty-one percent of the teachers with a B.S. thought it was important; however, 71 percent of those teachers with a M.S. thought it was important. Also, 82 percent of those teachers who have 1 or 2 years of experience in education believe it is important, but only 49 percent of those teachers with 3 or more years of experience found it important.

The last question is significant to this researcher because of the number of respondents who do not believe it is important for teachers to be observed by other teachers. Only 29-47 percent of the teachers overall felt it was important for peer observation to occur. The highest percentage of teachers who found it important was the

teachers with the least teaching experience.

Based upon the findings of this survey, several interesting conclusions may be made about teachers' perceptions of their inservice needs in the Archdiocese of Omaha. This will be explored in depth in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The professionals who work in Catholic schools are constantly faced with many challenges in providing quality staff development programs due to their limited budgets and small faculties. Are the teachers and administrators in these schools meeting the challenges?

What are the inservice needs of Catholic elementary teachers? What do they believe are the most effective methods and activities to be utilized in inservice programs? Can Catholic school administrators address the needs of their teachers within the constraints of their budgets? Do other interest groups such as the Archdiocesan office staff or the school boards play a role in establishing Catholic elementary teachers' inservice programs? These were the questions the researcher had intended to answer following an analysis of the data collected.

A review of the literature clearly indicated that needs assessment is a necessary component of staff development. The RPTIM model proposed by Wood, McQuarrie, and Thompson (1982) discussed a Planning stage in which individual goals are determined as well as building goals. Loucks and Zigarmi's (1981) Concerns-Based Adoption Model focused on the concept of teachers continuously giving input as to

their needs. Marshall and Caldwell (1982, 1984) did a number of studies on needs assessment, both formal and informal. In every study this researcher read, the authors concluded by stating that teachers must be given an opportunity to provide input on their needs in the area of staff development.

The purpose of this research was to assess the perceptions of teachers in Catholic elementary schools in Omaha in the area of inservice activity as it should be practiced in their schools. Through careful analysis of the responses to the survey, this researcher believes some conclusions may be drawn about this issue and the other issues that have been raised concerning Catholic elementary teachers' inservice needs.

A survey method of research was chosen, and procedures were followed to ensure an adequate response rate. The questionnaire asked the respondents to state how many years of experience in education they had, and their level of educational preparation. The researcher coded the questionnaires to determine which grade level was taught by each respondent. There were 22 items for the teachers to respond to, and they rated each item on a Likert-type scale (numbered 1-5) ranging from "Not Important" to "Very Important."

The data were aggregated and then categorized by the

grade level taught, the educational level the respondent had attained, and by their years of experience in education. The number of respondents who indicated "Important" or "Very Important" were summed up for each question and then divided by the total number of respondents to obtain a percentage for each question. A question by question analysis was made, and based upon this analysis, some interesting conclusions were drawn. They are as follows:

#### Conclusions

Questions 9-12 in the survey pointed out clearly that all teachers in Catholic elementary schools regardless of experience, educational level attained, or grade level taught believe they should be actively involved in the planning and execution of inservice activities. They believe that the inservice activities should grow primarily out of the needs of the teachers, then out of the needs of the individual schools, and finally from the needs of the Archdiocese.

Rather than having only the school administrators take on the responsibility of planning teachers' inservice activities, the teachers believe that the planning and execution of the inservice program should be a cooperative venture between teachers and administrators.

These findings are in agreement with previous research that has been conducted in the area of needs assessment and

staff development. It reaffirms the concept that all teachers, both in the public and Catholic schools, recognize the importance of professional development. The Catholic school educators are in accord with their public school counterparts about being actively involved in the planning and executing of the inservice programs.

An analysis of Table I by each categorical division yielded some interesting conclusions. In comparing the results of the primary grade teachers with the intermediate teachers and the junior high teachers, this researcher found that intermediate teachers were less willing to discuss their teaching with colleagues than the primary or junior high teachers.

The survey also showed that the primary and intermediate teachers were more strongly in favor of their individual schools planning and conducting inservice activities than the junior high teachers. This researcher believes that there may be two reasons for this result. Junior high teachers may need inservice programs that deal specifically with the subject matter that each teacher is working with (for example, science, English, math); or perhaps it is because children at this age are so different developmentally from younger children, and the teachers are looking for different approaches in working with them.

The final question that showed a significant difference

between the grade levels taught was "The inservice program should be based upon specific objectives." Teachers of the primary grades did not believe that to be as important as the intermediate and junior high teachers.

In comparing teachers with bachelor's degrees to those who have master's degrees, there were two questions that stood out with significant differences in percentages. Those teachers who had bachelor's degrees believed much more strongly in having inservice activities which provide opportunities to work on individual projects. Conversely, 71 percent of the teachers who had attained their master's degrees believed that more teacher inservice time should be provided for the staff as opposed to only 51 percent of the teachers with bachelor's degrees.

In the final category - years of experience in education - significant differences between first and second year teachers and the more experienced teachers were noted. The less experienced teachers did not believe it was important to share common interests and concerns with others. However, they did believe very strongly (94%) in experimenting with different teaching methods. Perhaps this is because first and second year teachers still lack confidence in their performance and are still working through various teaching techniques to see what works for them. The teachers with more experience have ironed out

most of their classroom routines and are sure enough of themselves to share their ideas with others.

The survey results also showed that the less experienced teachers wanted more inservice time. These beginning teachers discover that undergraduate teacher education programs provide a framework for their profession, but once they go into the classroom on their own, they realize that a broader knowledge base is helpful.

One final observation on the results of the survey: teachers overall were not in favor of being observed by other teachers. Traditionally, principals have been responsible for the observation of teachers, and perhaps teachers feel threatened by the idea of peer observation. The group of teachers were the first or second year teachers. These beginning teachers realize they have much to learn, and by engaging in peer observation, the less experienced teacher may learn some valuable teaching techniques.

### Recommendations

Based upon the research that has been conducted on Catholic elementary teachers' inservice needs, the following recommendations are made:

The people responsible for inservice programs in the Catholic elementary schools should re-examine present practices and ask themselves these questions:



Do the inservice programs grow primarily from the needs of the teachers, then from the needs of the schools, and finally from the needs of the Archdiocese? Do the teachers work cooperatively with the administrator to plan and execute the inservice program? Are there opportunities available for teachers to become aware of the latest teaching techniques and materials? The survey results indicated these were areas of importance to the respondents. If staff development programs are not presently addressing these needs, adjustments should be made.

Past research as well as the results of this research clearly indicate that cooperative efforts on the part of both administrators and teachers are necessary components for needs assessment as well as for choosing methods and activities for inservice programs. If teachers are not currently involved in planning and executing inservice programs which primarily meet their needs, and meet the school's needs secondarily, the survey results indicate that a change should be made in this direction.

The Archdiocesan office may be utilized in an advisory capacity, and, in particular, schools should continue to be constantly alert to the programs offered through the Department of Religious Education. These programs would be especially beneficial to teachers who are working toward religious certification.

Those teachers and administrators responsible for the staff development program may want to explore the educational resources available in the metropolitan area in order to gain better knowledge of the latest teaching techniques and materials. Cooperative efforts with the public school systems can be affordable as well as useful in involving Catholic school teachers in programs such as Project Success or TESA offered through the Omaha Public Schools. Local universities provide many opportunities for professional growth such as the distinguished lecture series at the University of Nebraska at Omaha or the summer science teachers' workshop. Those teachers who are interested in pursuing advanced degrees may find that graduate credit could be earned through some of these staff development activities.

The Catholic schools have worked together in the past in cooperative programs such as Kindergarten teachers "Sharing Days," and more of these informal inservice activities could be implemented since the survey indicated that the respondents preferred these types of activities. Another low cost method of inservicing teachers is through professional reading. There are a number of books, magazines, periodicals, and brochures that can be made available for teachers to read and discuss together over lunch, during planning periods, or before and after school.

This is another way teachers could keep current on the latest techniques and materials of their profession.

The survey showed that 94 percent of the beginning teachers want to experiment with different teaching methods, and that at least 92 percent of the more experienced teachers want to share common interests and concerns. Because the research supports the idea that teachers value informal inservice activities, time should be provided for them to participate in activities which meet these needs.

If one returns to the original questions that were presented at the beginning of this paper, the answers lie in the survey results and in the conclusions which were drawn based upon the research as well as personal experience in a Catholic school setting.

It is possible to develop quality inservice programs for Catholic elementary teachers if the teachers are properly involved in the planning and implementing of the programs.

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APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Please supply the following information by placing a check mark in the blank of the category which applies to you.

1. Year of experience in education including this year:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 Years                      \_\_\_\_\_ 3-9 Years                      \_\_\_\_\_ 10 or More Years

2. Level of educational preparation--indicate the highest degree held:

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's Degree                      \_\_\_\_\_ Specialist Degree

\_\_\_\_\_ Master's Degree                      \_\_\_\_\_ Six Year Degree or Certificate

\_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate

**Processes of Teacher Inservice Education**

Please rate the following processes of teacher inservice as you perceive the way they should be practiced in your school.

**Instructions:**

Circle the appropriate category. The response categories are:

1. Not Important                      2. Of Little Importance                      3. Undecided  
4. Of Some Importance                      5. Very Important

		Not Important		Very Important	
		_____		_____	
1. The inservice activities should provide opportunities for the teachers to share with others common interests and concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The inservice program should provide opportunities for teachers to engage in testing new ideas in education with the assistance of outside consultants.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The inservice activities should provide opportunities for teachers to discuss their teaching with colleagues who have observed their teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

Not Important      Very Important

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4. The inservice program should provide opportunities for individual schools to plan and conduct inservice activities.	0 1	2	3	4	5
5. The inservice program should provide opportunities for small groups of teachers to be released during the regularly scheduled school day to participate in school activities.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The inservice activities should provide opportunities for teachers to experiment with different teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The inservice activities should provide opportunities for teachers to become familiar with the latest research in education.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The inservice activities should provide opportunities for teachers to become aware of the latest teaching techniques and materials.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The inservice should grow out of the needs of teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The inservice activities should grow out of the needs of the Archdiocese.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The inservice activities should grow out of the needs of the individual school.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Administrators should have primary responsibility for identifying the teachers inservice activities.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Teachers and administrators should work cooperatively in planning and execution of inservice activities.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Teachers should have decision making responsibilities in inservice education.	1	2	3	4	5



	Not Important	Very Important			
	1	2	3	4	5
15. The inservice programs should include activities which provide opportunities for different interests of teachers by allowing them to work on individual projects.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Teachers should improve their skills by being actively involved in the inservice experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Administrators should participate in the teacher inservice activities.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The inservice programs should be based on specific objectives generated by teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Small group activities should be part of the inservice program.	1	2	3	4	5
20. School administrators should be committed to teacher inservice education.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The inservice program should be continuous over a sufficient time span to insure that the developed performance meets the objectives sought.	1	2	3	4	5
22. The inservice program should include teachers observing other teachers.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX B

J.M.J.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to develop a descriptive profile of what staff development programs should be like in the Omaha Catholic elementary schools and to determine inservice needs and interests for personal and professional development.

Data from this questionnaire should also provide a stimulus for discussion and planning among those with a stake in the future needs and directions for teacher inservice within the Omaha Catholic elementary schools.

Your responses will also assist me in writing a thesis as part of my specialist degree program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. My advisor is Dr. Katherine Kasten, Department of Educational Administration and Supervision. Distribution of this questionnaire has been approved by Sister Mary Ann Gschwind, Superintendent of the Omaha Archdiocese Department of Education.

Please take a few minutes to carefully complete the enclosed questionnaire. Return the questionnaire by May 9, in the enclosed post-paid envelope. All information will be confidential.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Stephen Kleinsmith, Principal  
Catholic Southeast School  
Omaha, NE

Table 1

<u>Question</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Intermediate</u>	<u>Junior High</u>	<u>BS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>(1-2 Yrs)</u>	<u>(3-9 Yrs)</u>	<u>(10+ Yrs)</u>
Share with others common interests & concerns.	94%	90%	92%	94%	82%	71%	96%	92%
Teachers to receive assistance from outside consultants.	92%	85%	92%	89%	94%	76%	92%	92%
Discuss their teaching with colleagues.	81%	68%	88%	79%	71%	92%	75%	76%
Individual schools to plan & conduct inservice activities.	75%	73%	58%	69%	82%	71%	67%	76%
Small groups of teachers to be released during the regularly schedule school day to participate in school activities.	58%	50%	67%	59%	47%	65%	59%	53%
Teachers to experiment with different teaching methods.	77%	65%	88%	76%	71%	94%	75%	75%
Teachers to become familiar with the latest research in education.	90%	85%	75%	87%	76%	88%	88%	82%
Teachers should become aware of the latest teaching techniques and materials.	98%	95%	92%	96%	94%	94%	100%	92%
Grow out of the needs of the teachers.	94%	98%	98%	95%	94%	94%	92%	98%

Table 1 (Continued)

<u>Question</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Intermediate</u>	<u>Junior High</u>	<u>BS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>(1-2 Yrs)</u>	<u>(3-9 Yrs)</u>	<u>(10+ Yrs)</u>
Grow out of the needs of the Archdiocese.	56%	50%	46%	55%	41%	41%	49%	59%
Grow out of the needs of the individual schools.	88%	98%	96%	92%	100%	94%	90%	96%
Administrators should have primary responsibility for identifying the teachers' inservice activities.	33%	40%	29%	36%	29%	35%	24%	47%
Teachers & administrators should work cooperatively in Planning & execution of inservice activities.	94%	93%	100%	94%	100%	94%	96%	94%
Teachers should have decision making responsibilities in inservice planning.	85%	88%	83%	85%	88%	76%	90%	84%
Include activities which provide opportunities to work on individual projects.	62%	60%	71%	68%	41%	76%	57%	65%
Inservice experiences should be designed to "actively" involve teachers.	81%	70%	92%	79%	82%	88%	76%	80%
Administrators should participate in teacher inservice activities.	87%	85%	88%	89%	71%	76%	84%	92%

Table 1 (Continued)

<u>Question</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Intermediate</u>	<u>Junior High</u>	<u>BS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>(1-2 Yrs)</u>	<u>(3-9 Yrs)</u>	<u>(10+ Yrs)</u>
Based on specific objectives.	63%	90%	96%	86%	100%	88%	88%	88%
Small group activities should be part of the inservice program.	56%	55%	67%	57%	59%	76%	55%	53%
School administrators should be committed to the teacher inservice program.	85%	75%	96%	81%	94%	76%	82%	86%
More teacher inservice time should be provided for staff.	56%	50%	54%	51%	71%	82%	49%	49%
Teachers to be observed by other teachers.	33%	35%	42%	36%	29%	47%	31%	35%

\* The percents listed represent the percent of respondents responding either as important or very important.