Is the past prologue? Part 1: a qualitative analysis of PDS dissertation research focused on learning

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Abstract
Purpose – This study provides an analysis of professional development school (PDS) dissertation research that focuses on learning in PDSs. These 103 dissertations written between 1990 and 2020 address an aspect of learning in PDS work, including inquiry as a pedagogical learning tool, student learning PK-12, intern/teacher candidate learning, university teacher educator learning, and inservice teacher learning. From the current exploration of PDS dissertations, most especially from the comparison studies, the authors have learned that there is still no clear path to presenting PDS as having a positive impact when compared with non-PDS experiences.

Design/methodology/approach – Within each of these categories, the authors examine the dissertations by methodology and explore common themes among dissertation findings. As the PDS movement enters its third decade of inquiry and builds its efficacy on models of learning, the findings provide insight into the degree to which PDS scholars are building on the past to determine future PDS research agendas around learning.

Findings – The authors examine the dissertations by methodology and explore common themes among dissertation findings. The themes included: intern learning does happen in PDS sites; PDSs provide structures for intern learning; teacher educators can learn from their PDS work; dissertations in the area of student learning overwhelmingly had inconclusive findings, except for research that focused on targeted interventions, which demonstrated student gains.

Research limitations/implications – With fewer PDS-focused dissertations being written in more recent years, the authors wonder if the complexity of PDS may be a deterrent to the growth and sustainability of this model?

Practical implications – From the current exploration of PDS dissertations, most especially from the comparison studies, the authors have learned that the authors still do not have a clear path to presenting PDS as having a positive impact when compared with non-PDS experiences. However, the authors are beginning to understand the types of studies that are needed to move this agenda forward and hope the work will help inform the PDS community of some.

Originality/value – This is the first known study of PDS dissertations across time.

Keywords PDS research, PDS dissertation research, Learning in PDS

Paper type Research paper

Introduction
This study builds on a previous study, The past is prologue: A trend and content analysis of professional development school dissertation research between 1990 and 2018

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(Garin & Burns, 2020) that provided a snapshot of the nature, context, timeline, and content of 204 professional development school (PDS) doctoral dissertations written over the last three decades. This study examines a subset of those dissertations that focus on learning within PDS work often described as simultaneous renewal (Garin & Burns, 2020; Martinie, Rumsey, Allen, Bennett, & Abernathy, 2014; Teitel, 2004). The subset of 103 dissertations were examined and grouped into five categories examining aspects of learning in PDS, including (1) inquiry as a pedagogical learning tool (2) PK-12 student (i.e., child), learning (3) university-based teacher educator (i.e., professor), learning, (4) inservice teacher learning, and (5) teacher candidate/ intern learning. While there are inconclusive findings across many of the thematic categories, several conclusions may be drawn. The PDS model enables the preparation of teacher candidates to have an inquiry stance during their internship and into their teaching careers, cultivates a context where teacher learning is an expectation and norm, supports shifts in instructional practice, and offers supports for intern learning. Furthermore, targeted interventions in PDS result in student gains. As the PDS movement enters its third decade of inquiry and builds its efficacy related to creating contexts for all stakeholder learning, the findings of this study provide an overview of completed dissertation studies to allow PDS scholars to build on the past to determine future PDS research agendas.

Theoretical framework
PDSs were designed to accomplish four agendas related to learning: preparing future educators, providing current educators with ongoing professional development, encouraging joint school-university shared inquiry opportunities, and promoting the learning of PK-12 students (NAPDS, 2021). What it Means to Be a Professional Development School (NAPDS, 2008, 2021) dives deeper into the theme of learning in PDSs by reviewing nine essentials for how to guide learning in PDS partnerships. The nine essentials embody the articulation of the fundamental qualities of a “professional development school” by the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS). For example, Essential One calls for a comprehensive mission that includes equity and PK-12 learning. Essential Three focuses on professional learning and leading guided by a need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.

Methods and data sources
Two research questions guided this analysis:

RQ1. What are the research method trends utilized to study learning in PDS?

RQ2. What themes can be identified within each of the categories of dissertation research related to learning (inquiry as a pedagogical tool, PK-12 student learning, university-based teacher educator learning, inservice teacher learning, intern/teacher candidate learning)?

For part 1 of this study, the authors conducted a keyword search of the Dissertations Abstracts International database for the years 1990-2020 and identified 204 dissertations. The authors restricted the search to studies with “Professional Development School,” “Professional Development Schools,” or “PDS” in the title, as the studies that placed “PDS” in the title more likely positioned PDS at the forefront rather than just noting PDS as the context for the research. The authors used a Microsoft Access database, which facilitated organization and analysis; assisted in maintaining the data integrity; and allowed for Microsoft Excel software analysis.

Then, the authors categorized the dissertations by methodology (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods) and by focus. Thirty-two content codes emerged in this subset of dissertations.
For this our second dissertation study, we decided to focus on the five of the thirty-two codes that address learning in PDSs (inquiry, teacher educator learning, teacher learning, intern learning, and PK-12 learning) because PDSs were designed to accomplish four agendas related to learning for current educators, future educators, shared inquiry, and K-12 learning. These dissertations were reviewed at the first level by the dissertation abstract and at the second level by the dissertation findings. At times, other parts of the dissertations were also examined. When a dissertation was coded in more than one category, we used peer examination (Creswell, 2007) to ensure trustworthiness in the coding process. Within each of these categories, the dissertations were examined by their methodologies to identify common themes across subsets of dissertations and to highlight unique findings. Data were used to analyze the impact of the PDS dissertation research to understand learning in the PDS community.

After the dissertations were identified, the authors used the inductive processes of memoing and content analysis. Memoing (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2018) is a flexible strategy in qualitative research wherein the process of construction and nature of content is determined by the preferences and abilities of the researcher and the aims and focus of the specific research study. Memoing was used to reflect, clarify, and arrange themes within each subset of PDS learning. This was accomplished through chronological reflective journal entries written within and across themes. Content analysis serves as a valuable tool for studying educational documents, as the process allows researchers to gather data and use a systematic approach to identify themes to enumerate data within selected categories. Using content analysis, we reviewed each dissertation for specific findings and then moved to more general analysis of themes across categories and methodologies. Adams and Schvaneveldt (1985) referred to this feature as sensitivity to context and symbolic forms. These processes made the data easier to manage given the number of dissertations studied.

Results
We provide a window into the nature of the findings by discussing five categories: Inquiry, PK-12 learning, teacher educator learning, teacher learning, and intern/teacher candidate learning. Table 1 provides a summary of the dissertations reviewed.

Inquiry as a pedagogical learning tool in PDS
Inquiry as a pedagogical learning tool is a signature element of PDS work. Teacher inquiry is included in most writings that support the role of PDS in teacher education. The NAPDS (2008, 2021) nine essentials include three that focus specifically on the role of inquiry in PDS work including Essential 3: Professional Learning and


More recently, the AACTE Clinical Practice Commission also supported the role of teacher inquiry in teacher education by emphasizing the role of university and school partners in investigating challenges within a school or district through teacher action research or joint scholarly inquiry (2018).

Since the 1990s only four dissertations (Amond, 2008; Irvin, 2005; Ogletree, 2008; Snow-Gerono, 2003) have focused on the topic of inquiry. Of these, only one (Ogletree, 2008) was a quantitative study. Thus, the authors wondered, if inquiry is a signature focus in PDS, why are there so few dissertations addressing this topic?

Several themes emerged across the findings of these four dissertations. The research demonstrates what an inquiry stance looks like, and that educators can and should prepare
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Table 1. Summary of dissertations reviewed (continued)
teacher candidates to have an inquiry stance towards teaching. Ogletree’s quantitative research shows a positive link to increased PK-12 student achievement in the classrooms where teacher candidates conducted action research.

Creating an inquiry stance. Three dissertations utilized a qualitative approach to studying inquiry in PDS. Snow-Gerono’s (2003) case study shows us how the PDS program prepares teachers to have and maintain an inquiry stance throughout their teaching careers and illustrates that an inquiry stance may not look exactly the same for everyone. This study helps teacher educators learn more about how to plant a seed of inquiry in prospective teachers that will hopefully blossom and continue to grow throughout their teaching careers. The importance of this study is that it examines the long-term impact of PDS preparation, provides us with a better understanding of what an inquiry-oriented stance is, and gives us a better understanding of how to prepare preservice teachers with an inquiry-oriented stance toward teaching. The next dissertation, Irvin (2005), uses a phenomenological approach to examine the role of teacher efficacy and enacting and maintaining an inquiry stance while developing a listing of supports that the PDS model provides. The PDS relationship provides such supports as a focus on inquiry, mentor teacher–intern relationship and assistance from university personnel. Teacher efficacy grows as teachers are empowered to study their own practice. Finally, Amond (2008) uses case study methodology to study the long-term impact

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Table 1.
of learning to teach in a PDS that fosters teacher inquiry. The importance of this study is that it examines the long-term impact of PDS preparation, provides us with a better understanding of what an inquiry-oriented stance is, and gives us a better understanding of how to prepare preservice teachers with an inquiry-oriented stance toward teaching. Together, these three qualitative studies help define inquiry orientation with PDS and establish how an orientation toward inquiry is established and maintained.

Impact of inquiry on PK-12 learning
Ogeltree (2008) authored the only quantitative dissertation studying the role of inquiry in PDS through a quasi-experimental design in which methods were mixed. This dissertation examined the effects of the Theme Teacher-Intern Professor (TIP) model implemented in a PDS on participating Georgia State University interns and student academic achievement. This dissertation focused on student achievement of elementary students and programmatic differences between the TIP schools as well as the intern self-efficacy in the TIP schools. In addition, this study compared TIP and non-TIP schools which yielded the following results: student achievement in the TIP classrooms was higher than in the control groups and teacher candidates preferred the extended internship and participation in action research that the TIP model provided.

These dissertations reveal two outcomes of PDS. First, teacher inquiry specifically conducted in a PDS context has benefits for teachers, interns, and the children they teach, and second, PDS provides an important structure for teacher and intern inquiry. These dissertations address the importance of preparing teacher candidates to have an inquiry stance during their internship and into their teaching careers and suggest that the PDS model enables this preparation.

PK-12 student learning
Student learning is at the heart of PDS work. NCATE (2001) cites student learning in each of their Standards for PDS (pp. 11-18). NAPDS (2021) embeds PK-12 learning into each of the nine essentials with specific language used in essentials 1, 3, 4, and 5. This specific language includes improvement of PK-12 learning, ongoing activities that promote learning, enhanced educational opportunities for PK-12 students, and planned study of the PDS work and its effects on learning. PDSs were designed to accomplish what has been known to be called the “four pillars” of PDS work, one of which is promoting the learning of PK-12 students (Holmes Group, 1990). Yet only 12 of the 204 dissertations focused solely on student learning and with mixed results.

PK-12 student learning in comparison studies yield inconclusive results. Of the 12 dissertations focused on student learning, four (Frey, 2003; Kennedy, 2018; Kim, 2005; Walker, 2014) identified as mixed methods. Five (Anderson, 1995; Grissom, 2003; Hahn, 2000; Ogletree, 2007; and Lancaster, 1996) identified as quantitative, and three (Coler, 2014; Delane, 2010; Duling, 2003) identified as qualitative. We begin by exploring those dissertations that compared PDS and non-PDS settings.

The oldest of the student learning dissertations (Anderson, 1995) set the stage for the subset of dissertations that compared PDS and non-PDS settings, by examining the areas of attendance, grade point-average, standardized tests, behavior, and self-esteem in over 189 kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students. While Anderson found some differences in student achievement in the two settings, the students in the PDS program had fewer absences, fewer infractions, and more parent involvement.

Grissom (2003) also compared student achievement in PDS and non-PDS elementary schools and found that PDS was associated with higher achievement only in grade 4 science. Hahn (2000) compared PDS trained and non-PDS trained Initial Licensed Teachers to
determine the effects of the variables of teacher training, years of experience, and grade-level assignments. The results revealed that PDS trained teachers demonstrated higher levels of teacher efficacy than non-PDS trained teachers; however, evidence was lacking to support increased student achievement as a result of PDS training.

Kim (2005) found that students exposed to university PDS interns for a longer period tended to have higher achievement scores when controlling for prior abilities, socioeconomic statuses, and special education status. However, Standard Assessment Instruction (SAI) tests in reading and math average did not differ significantly based on university PDS interns in the classrooms. This result indicated that the PDS may need to be a long-term relationship to see improvement of children’s academic achievement rather than a short-term relationship. Nonetheless, this dissertation gives a nod to clinically rich extended internships in PDS settings.

Three additional dissertations (Lancaster, 1996; Ogletree, 2007; Walker, 2014) focused on PDS impact. Ogletree (2007) used a quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of PDS partnerships on student achievement in science and mathematics in 12 high-need, urban elementary, middle, and high schools. Three of the six ANOVAs showed significant change in achievement means for the PDS schools when using PDS school data only. However, when data from both PDS and matched comparison schools were analyzed, the overall results indicated no statistically significant gains in mathematics and science means for the PDS schools in relation to the comparison schools.

Lancaster (1996) also compares PDS and non-PDS results of having a teacher candidate in the classroom on the perceptions of learning environment for third and fourth grade students. Findings indicate that PDS classrooms with a teacher candidate became significantly more cohesive; however, teacher candidates did not have a significant impact on the learning environment perceptions of third and fourth grade students or teachers who did and did not have teacher candidates. Walker (2014) conducted a similar study focusing on the impact of student teachers on the learning environment. The results of this study indicate a positive impact on the learner centered, assessment centered, and knowledge centered learning environment from the perspectives of the high school students, teacher candidates, and mentor teachers themselves.

Targeted interventions yield PK-12 learning. Two dissertations (Frey, 2003; Kennedy, 2018) focused on literacy interventions to support K-12 learning. Both found that when teacher candidates assessed individual or small groups of children’s literacy skills and provided targeted interventions, there were gains in literacy scores. Using a targeted approach to PK-12 learning in PDS may offer an additional area to study.

Qualitative dissertations yield inconclusive results. The qualitative dissertations addressing PK-12 learning also yielded inconclusive results, with little data to support increased student learning as a function of PDS. Duling (2003) cited a mentor teacher who reported that reading scores of some of her students, especially those in inclusion classes, increased as a result of having an extra set of hands in the classroom. This dissertation also noted positive changes in school climate. Delane (2010) made an interesting connection using Participatory Action Research to help three 4th-grade children that were marginalized by school sorting practices to develop positive academic identities. Coler’s (2014) findings suggest that PDS impacts student learning through engagement, relationships and having two or more pre-service candidates in the classroom.

It is noteworthy that both the quantitative and mixed methods dissertations could not show a direct and consistent link between PDS and student learning. Some of the dissertations did offer insight into how the PDS structure supports student learning, classroom and school environment, and the teacher candidate experience. Two of the studies promoted the use of action research as an important aspect of the internship, and one encouraged student participation in action research alongside mentor teachers and teacher
candidates. However, the qualitative dissertations demonstrated a positive impact on PK-12 learning by using a targeted approach. This targeted approach to student interventions offers an additional approach to study.

*University-based teacher educator learning*

PDS program quality is influenced by the qualities of university personnel. Specifically, as discussed by Burns, Jacobs, and Yendol-Hoppey (2020), university-based teacher educators require strong supervision skills and an understanding of how to integrate course content and clinical practice. Darling-Hammond (2014) defined well-supervised clinical experience as essential, referring to both the quality and intensity of supervisors’ work as factors that affect teacher candidate learning. Similarly, teacher candidates benefit by having course content integrated seamlessly into the work they do in PDS classrooms. The dissertations included in this section of the analysis focus on the university faculty member learning as a teacher educator. Although we initially identified seven dissertations in the area of teacher educator learning published between 1995 and 2016, after further review only five focused on teacher educator learning. These five dissertations described what the work of teacher educators in PDSs looked like as well as how they learned to engage in PDS work as a teacher educator.

To better understand the work of university-based teacher educators in the PDS, Julian (1995) investigated the beliefs and perceptions held by selected teacher education professors regarding their individual roles as teacher educators in PDSs. The faculty identified themselves in roles described as helpers, facilitators, colleagues, and team members who were strongly committed to close involvement with the faculty and staff at their assigned PDSs. The faculty described their own role as focusing on the development of teacher candidates as well as working to improve PDS classrooms. Similarly, Madden (2005) specifically studied the role of university liaisons within PDSs. Using the metaphors of movement and bridges, Madden described the university supervisors’ work as building relationships, processes, and identities. In both cases, the university faculty noted experiencing both exuberance and sacrifice as essential elements of their work. Unfortunately, neither study described the many roles that university faculty play within the PDS nor too little attention seemed to be provided to how university faculty members might be prepared to assume these roles.

Given that faculty make a shift in the nature of their work assignment when working in the PDS, Singo (1998) studied the effects of working in a PDS on faculty experiences related to research, teaching and service. This interview study identified a set of characteristics distinguishing faculty work within the PDS subculture of teacher education programs from the typical university culture. The characteristics included (a) an emphasis on groundedness and collaboration in research, (b) the pursuit of knowledge as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, (c) stronger connections between research and teaching, (d) an emphasis on the scholarship of application, (e) greater emphasis on collaborative dissemination, (f) a norm of collaboration rather than autonomy and individualism, (g) a mismatch between PDS subculture values and the traditional values of promotion, tenure, and merit pay; and (h) career development of junior faculty being slowed due to differences in the subculture norms. These characteristics suggest a counterculture movement away from traditionally defined university faculty role and challenges that influence their learning about how they need to adjust to actualize long-term success in those roles. One dissertation did focus on how university faculty learned within the PDS context. Alexander (2016) investigated the supervisors’ work within the PDS using the problems supervisors encountered in their practice. Using a multiple case study methodology, Alexander explored the resources that supervisors draw upon to resolve challenges in their practices, pointing specifically to the importance of prior coursework preparation and participation in a community of other supervisors as key to teacher educator learning.
In addition to developing an understanding of the work of university-based teacher educators in the PDS and how they begin to learn and negotiate those roles, one dissertation focused on understanding one aspect of the pedagogy of clinical practice. Storz (1998) investigated the beliefs and perceptions about race and racism that teacher educators bring to the classroom, unconsciously and consciously, that are often ignored. Teacher educator learning emerged in the “epilogue” of the dissertation as Storz reflected on his own teaching experience within the PDS. Storz identified how this work helped him make sense of himself as a racial being, complicated his understanding of his role as a teacher educator, and made him rethink the nature of his research as well as his role and responsibility as a researcher. Recognizing the importance of inquiry into one’s own self as a teacher educator, Storz noted that the study provided the opportunity to continue to transform his understandings of race and racism both personally and professionally.

Although these dissertations suggest that teacher educators can learn as they engage in PDS work, the expanded roles and responsibilities are many and differ in significant ways from traditional conceptions of faculty teaching, research, and scholarly activity. In combination, these dissertation studies point to the importance of learning the complexity of the role, how the role fits within the culture of higher education, and how inquiry into one’s own role as a teacher educator can lead to teacher educator learning. Still missing from the literature is where or how teacher education faculty acquire these skills (Burns, 2012).

**Inservice teacher learning**

Inservice teacher learning is identified as a key component of PDS work. This section summarizes the dissertations that focused on teacher learning within a PDS. To date, the PDS movement has sought to provide opportunities for teacher learning by creating a culture of learning that promotes teacher professional learning through boundary spanning roles, reflection, and innovation. We identified 27 dissertations that contributed to the knowledge base of teacher learning within the PDS. The findings emerge within four areas: (1) PDSs create a culture of teacher learning, (2) PDSs support job-embedded professional learning pedagogies that support teacher learning, (3) PDSs provide a context to learn about teacher leadership, and (4) Learning within a PDS shifts instructional practice.

**PDSs generate a culture of teacher learning.** The majority of the dissertations related to teacher learning depicted the role that the PDS plays in creating a culture of teacher learning, namely that all members of the PDS community work together to improve teaching and learning. Much evidence exists to support the principle that PDSs cultivate a context where teacher learning is an expectation and norm. Pinkston (2007), Francis (2004), and Thompson (2007) conducted qualitative studies that found that the PDS supported teacher learning behaviors such as heightened awareness, modeling, collaboration, and reflection. These behaviors positioned teachers to make changes in educational practices and establish high expectations for student achievement. Similarly, Lawrence (1999) and Frances (2004) examined PDS teacher perceptions about their learning and described their involvement leading to deeper reflections which began to cultivate their role of teacher researchers and the cultivation of an inquiry stance. In another example of teacher learning, Duling (2003) found that serving as a mentor not only positively influenced the teacher’s own awareness and reflection, but also encouraged their use of new or “forgotten” instructional methodologies.

Several studies point to the factors that facilitate and hinder the creation of a culture for PDS teacher learning. Hawkins (2010) explored conditions that facilitate professional development and the ways in which engagement supported teacher learning. Hawkins found that the following conditions influenced teacher learning: (1) school and district mandates,
(2) administrators, (3) interns, and (4) the literacy program. In addition to these conditions, Hetzel (2008) identified facilitators to teacher learning by describing the importance of access to a toolbox of resources as well as research-based support for enhancing instructional practices. Scott (1994) identified other support structures as important in creating a culture of teacher learning that includes influencing the teacher’s ability and willingness to create new knowledge cultivating a professional orientation among teachers who actively participate. Williams’ (1999) study indicated that intern access to university faculty provided resources and opportunities for learning and innovation. Beattie (1992) also identified that teachers benefitted by collaboration with university professors. Beattie found that teachers who collaborated with professors showed greater understanding of research and resulted in greater professional growth.

Some of the studies identified barriers to teacher professional learning within the PDS. For example, Bush (2015) found that too many simultaneous changes hindered professional learning. Teachers faced new district and state change initiatives and worked together in a professional learning community to negotiate and navigate those changes. This study identified barriers to professional learning that emerged when too many initiatives were simultaneously presented, clear goals were not provided, and trust was not established. Interestingly, Grove’s (2016) study illustrated that teachers who were highly involved in PDS activities experienced the PDS differently from low involvement teacher participants. The involved teacher participants believed the school partnership supported multiple opportunities for professional development including enhanced teacher leadership possibilities and empowerment through teacher generated and teacher-led professional development. On the other hand, Grove found that low involvement teachers did not acknowledge these enhanced professional learning opportunities, suggesting that even within the PDS uneven learning existed. However, much evidence indicates that PDSs cultivate a context where teacher learning is an expectation and norm.

Clinical pedagogies that support teacher learning within PDS. Several studies identified clinical pedagogies that were cultivated through PDS work. Although experiences varied, evidence suggests clinical pedagogies serve as a tool for creating shared spaces for collaborative learning within PDSs. These clinical pedagogies include inquiry, lesson study, and co-teaching (Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014). Pendergraft’s (2007) study showed that teachers conceptualized the “inquiry project” as a space to create an action plan, investigation, and an opportunity for learning. Snow-Gerono (2003) found that teachers who committed to an inquiry stance generated growth for teachers and students. Studies related to inquiry found that collaborative study groups enhanced cohesion and collaboration by serving as an arena for educators to practice the discipline of team learning, functioned as a forum for meaningful dialogue, provided a conduit for building and communicating shared vision, and promoted opportunities for the development and understanding of systems thinking (Mebane, 2000; Snow-Gerono, 2003; Tenuto, 2006). In sum, across all studies, inquiry as a pedagogy strengthened teacher learning in the PDS.

In addition to inquiry, co-teaching emerged as a pedagogy for teacher learning within the PDS. Co-teachers shared points of view, developed conceptions of co-teaching and mentoring, and engaged in epistemological transformation about instructional planning. Titus (2016) found that co-teaching had additional benefits. It led to cogenerative dialogues as critical friendships were established. Stillisano (2004) found that co-teaching led to professional pride, collegial relationships, sources of new learning, personal/professional growth, and professional renewal within the PDS context. Similarly, Navarro (1997) investigated the collaborative learning experiences of two third grade PDS teachers to understand the meanings these teachers gave to their collaborative experiences. Navarro found seven factors that were critical for successful collaboration: colleagues, a school culture of support, the process of ongoing inquiry, opportunity to deepen subject matter knowledge, their narrative
about working together, and the core tasks of teaching. In sum, co-teaching served as a pedagogical learning tool within the PDS.

Study groups and lesson study (defined as a structured, collaborative inquiry into a particular lesson) served as a third pedagogical tool. Montes (2005) explored the use of Japanese Lesson Study within the PDS. A team of four TWI teachers and their three preservice candidates participated in the Japanese Lesson Study Model of collaborative lesson planning to investigate achievement gaps for English Learners and found the work created a collaborative learning culture. Study groups also led to a collaborative learning culture. Fisler (2002) investigated the impact of study groups on teacher learning, identifying that teacher learning varied significantly. She noted that many teachers made career-changing modifications to their teaching practices. A few even made very consequential changes that altered their beliefs and attitudes towards teaching, how they thought about teaching and how they related with other professionals. However, others made only incremental changes and a small group made little or no change and considered the PDS a distraction and undue burden on already overextended teachers. Although experiences varied, evidence suggests that study groups serve as a tool for creating shared spaces for collaborative learning within PDSs.

Evidence of inservice teacher learning. Finally, three dissertations discussed teacher learning related to teacher leadership and one dissertation focused specifically on teacher learning that resulted in shifts in teacher practice. Cosenza (2010) used an interview of 22 PDS teachers to explore how veteran teachers learned about teacher leadership and how they understood the PDS model contributed to their teacher leadership development. Cosenza found that teachers learned general leadership activities such as how to collaborate, share best practices, take action, serve as a role model and understand formal leadership roles. Additionally, Cosenza identified that teachers learned about PDS-specific teacher leadership activities such as mentoring, guest lecturing, and facilitating professional learning of others as well as the complexity of teacher learning and school change. Johnson (2016) explored PDS teacher leadership using a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. The study identified a link between teacher professional and leadership growth and participation in the PDS.

A set of dissertations showed promise in terms of documented shifts in teaching and leading practices. For example, Kreamer (2003) examined teachers’ perceptions of their professional learning within a secondary science PDS and found that teachers’ learning was mediated by working with interns resulting in collaboratively shifting practice towards teaching science through inquiry. While Kreamer (2003) focused on collaboration as a catalyst for changes in practice, Cross (1992) focused on reflection and analysis. Cross (1992) explored teachers’ practical knowledge in the context of curriculum planning. The focus of the study was on what the teachers learned about their daily planning as they made curriculum decisions related to a new school philosophy and courses of study (drawing on Sizer). Findings from this study indicate that the interplay of reflecting on practical knowledge juxtaposed with analysis of their acts and practices created inquiring professionals. The study emphasized the importance of the PDS in helping teachers become students of their own work. Finally, Burris (2011) conducted a mixed method study that found new ideas, concepts, and practices were integrated into their classroom instruction as teachers were afforded the space for experimentation and calculated risk taking. More specifically, the shifts in practice resulted in enhanced small group instruction, differentiation, guided reading, and science teaching. As another example of tangible instructional change, Gregory’s (2008) qualitative research study explored how educators described their shifting beliefs, values, roles, behaviors, rituals, and responsibilities. She found that embedded coursework for teacher candidates and practicing teachers to enhance writing instruction and inclusive practices shifted structures, relationships, and writing
practices. In sum, teachers acknowledged that their learning was advanced by collaboration, professionalism, and instructional practice and that the PDS was recognized as supporting shifts in instructional practice.

**Intern/teacher candidate learning**
The dissertations studying intern/teacher candidate learning offer interesting insights into PDS research. Initially, 50 dissertations were identified as addressing intern/teacher candidate learning. Close to half of those focused on both intern/teacher candidate and mentor teacher learning. Upon closer review, only 24 of the 50 dissertations were deemed to examine intern/teacher candidate learning as a primary construct. Of these 24 dissertations, eleven were qualitative, six were quantitative, and seven used a mixed methods approach. Several themes emerged in this subset of dissertations including a lack of common language, a tilt towards comparison studies with inconclusive findings, and the structure that PDS placements have that support specific aspects of intern learning.

**Lack of a common nomenclature.** The first insight that intern learning dissertations offer into PDS research is the lack of a common nomenclature. The dissertations use different terms to describe the university students in their PDS sites. These 24 dissertations describe the university students using the following terms: teacher interns, practicum students, pre-service interns, student teachers, preservice teachers, interns, teacher candidates, year-long interns. This aligns with the AACTE (2018) call for a common language for teacher preparation and teaching around a common lexicon that facilitates a collective understanding of the terms of clinical practice. In this document, the term teacher candidate is offered as a common term describing “an individual enrolled in a teacher preparation program that leads to a recommendation for initial-level state licensure” (p.11).

**Abundance of comparison studies with inconsistent results**
Another notable characteristic of this subset of dissertations is the abundance. \((n = 12)\) of comparison studies (Dadlez, 1998; Hildreth, 1997; Hopper, 2016; Komorek, 2014; Kuchinski, 2003; Miller, 2014; Patterson, 2004; Poe, 2003; Ray, 2013; Starling, 1999; Van Holten, 2016; Wright, 2009). In reviewing the results of these comparison studies, we continue to see a lack of consistent results that support the PDS internship model, unlike the Castle, Fox, and Souder (2006) study that compares PDS and nonPDS impact of PDSs on preservice teachers at the point of licensure. In this hallmark study, statistical analyses revealed PDS candidates scored significantly higher than nonPDS candidates on aspects of planning, instruction, management, and assessment. Qualitative analysis of portfolio presentations reveals PDS candidates showed greater ownership of their school and classroom and more sophistication in applying and integrating Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards.

Of these 12 studies on intern learning, four are quantitative (Poe, 2003; Ray, 2013; Van Holten, 2016; Wright, 2009), six are mixed methods (Dadlez, 1998; Hildreth, 1997; Komorek, 2014; Kuchinski, 2003; Patterson, 2004; Starling, 1999), and two are qualitative (Hopper, 2016; Miller, 2014).

The quantitative comparison studies’ results were inconsistent, with no clear indication that the PDS clinical experience yielded more positive results. Poe (2003), using structured interviews of building supervisors and university supervisors, found that in general, first-year elementary teachers who completed a year-long internship performed better than the mean of second/third-year elementary teachers who did not complete a yearlong internship in a PDS. However, when Van Holten (2016) examined intern learning through the lens of professional development categories such as working with diverse learners, the participants in both PDS and non-PDS agreed in their self-assessment in most categories, with no
Ray (2013) investigated self-reported perceptions of teacher efficacy related to first year teaching between PDS and non-PDS trained teachers. Those results indicated a higher mean score for PDS on each of the 24 survey items in the areas of classroom management and student engagement, but no significant differences were reported between groups in the area of instructional strategies. Wright (2009) determined that PDS field-based experiences had no significant relationship with student teachers’ PRAXIS II examination subtests scores, student teacher evaluation instrument scores, or their senior exit interview scores.

Intern learning does happen in PDS placements. The two qualitative comparison studies offered more positive findings for PDS. Miller (2014) found that first-year teachers who had completed a PDS internship expressed learning growth in their first year teaching, as compared to non-PDS graduates who shared more regrets and challenges from their first year of teaching. Hopper (2016) found that the PDS trained interns felt more acceptance in their placement, experienced more flexible and supportive mentor teachers, and had a better quality experience than their non-PDS counterparts who felt a lack of support at their sites.

The mixed methods comparison studies were more positive for the PDS clinical experiences on intern learning. Dadlez (1998) used two models of teacher professional development to view relative professional sophistication of graduates from teacher education programs and found that PDS teacher candidates concerns were more sophisticated. Furthermore, while a vast majority of PDS graduates were strongly satisfied with their teacher preparation program; traditional teacher education graduates were not. Patterson (2004) discovered that preservice teacher efficacy favored the yearlong internship over the one semester student teaching experience. In addition, yearlong internship students experienced a greater depth of support in their teaching experience from their mentor teachers than those completing the one semester student teaching experience. Kuchinski’s (2003) study yielded mixed results for PDS intern learning. These finding indicated no significant difference in selected teaching behaviors between post-baccalaureate preservice PDS participants and traditional teacher preparation programs. The findings also indicated that both groups of preservice teachers demonstrated weak classroom management skills. Starling (1999) found that the mature PDS environment was most successful in encouraging positive professional attitudes, the traditional school environment was moderately successful, and the newly established PDS was the least successful. The PDS model, however, provided a more meaningful field experience for PDS preservice teachers and allowed them to work in a cohort to develop a strong sense of support in a learning community. Hamar (2013) investigated the effectiveness of intern learning measured by the differences in participants’ scores on initial licensure examinations to determine whether there was a difference in teacher candidates who were prepared in a PDS yearlong internship and a traditional 14-week student teacher format, finding that PDS had only a limited effect on success on standardized licensure examinations.

**PDS provides intern learning and supporting structures.** The remaining non-comparison dissertations (eight qualitative studies and one mixed methods study) can be categorized into two themes: how PDSs structure intern learning (Engle, 2017; Hume, 1998; Keiffer-Baron, 1998; Schuchart, 2012; Tochterman, 1998) and what interns learn in their PDS placements (Armstrong, 2004; Engle, 2017; Ross, 2000; Tochterman, 1998; Wagstaff, 1997). Both the Engle (2017) and Tochterman (1998) studies include elements of both themes.

Four qualitative research dissertations address how PDSs provide structures for intern learning (Hume, 1998; Keiffer-Barone, 1998; Schuchart, 2012; Mule, 2000; Tochterman, 1998; Engle, 2017). Hume (1998) makes a case for PDS supporting intern reflection. A major finding of this research is that intern reflection about teaching is very important, particularly the way in which interns learned how to reflect and the conditions of support in the PDS that helped them to reflect on their actions rather than their fundamental beliefs. Keiffer-Barone (1998)
makes a case for PDSs providing teaching practice rather than theory. Results of this study emphasize that intern attrition is often the result of preservice preparation that is oriented toward theory and non-teaching practice, uneven support networks, and the interaction of challenging workplace conditions. Schuchart (2012) makes a case for authentic teaching tasks and finds that preservice teachers were more engaged in carrying out authentic teacher tasks that directed their attention away from their own concerns towards the social, emotional, and intellectual needs of their students. Keiffer-Barone (1998) also found that interns needed practical and emotional support to plan, complete and reflect on their teaching tasks. Mule (2000) advocates for environments providing a collegial support network through multiple mentoring relationships as well as interns appreciating the theory–practice connections facilitated by restructured methods courses, extended time in the field, and focus on inquiry, all hallmarks of the PDS structure.

Engle (2017) and Tochterman (1998) address both of the themes in intern learning, how PDS structures learning experiences and what interns learn in their PDS placements. Engle (2017) found that the PDS structure, placements of interns in PDS classrooms, and connections between methods courses and placements led to intern learning in the areas of best educational practices for planning and teaching and developing a philosophy of teaching. Intern growth was noted in the areas of classroom management, professionalism, always learning/knowing content, differentiating instruction, making connections, and monitoring and documenting student growth, among others.

Tochterman (1998) defined some of the opportunities that the PDS structure afforded interns by supporting and allowing students to make mistakes, experience personal growth, tie theory to practical experience, build professional networks, and work as a team. Within this structure, interns learned teaching strategies and gained reflective practices. Other qualitative dissertations pointed to areas of student learning including classroom management and practices in inquiry (Wagstaff, 1997; Ross, 2000) and developing teacher identities (Armstrong, 2004).

The dissertations studying intern learning speak positively about the PDS structure as a support for intern learning. However, these dissertations have mixed findings when they compare intern learning between PDS and non-PDS placements. Several of the dissertations define specific areas for intern learning and support the need for reflection and stronger links between methods courses and PDS classrooms. The studies following PDS and non-PDS interns into their first years of teaching emerge as a productive line for future PDS research.

Discussion
We have learned a great deal by examining the dissertation studies since 1990 related to PDS. For this, our second study we focused on the dissertations related to learning opportunities in PDS. We decided to isolate the dissertations on learning due to the focus and mission of PDSs to enhance learning for all partners. We learned that relatively few dissertations focus on inquiry (n = 4) and PK-12 student learning (n = 12), which is odd since inquiry is a signature focus of PDS, and student learning is one of the four pillars of PDS. However, qualitative studies do exist that help define inquiry orientation within PDS and establish how an orientation toward inquiry is established and maintained. Teacher inquiry specifically conducted in a PDS context has benefits for teachers, interns, and the children they teach. The PDS model enables this preparation of teacher candidates to have an inquiry stance during their internship and into their teaching careers. Dissertations in the area of student learning overwhelmingly had inconclusive findings, except for research that focused on targeted interventions, which demonstrated student gains.

Dissertations that examined outcomes for teacher educators, inservice teachers, and interns, were more common. Although the dissertations suggest that teacher educators can
learn as they engage in PDS work, their expanded roles and responsibilities are so varied and complex that conclusive evidence on where or how teacher education faculty acquire needed skills is still lacking. Much evidence exists to support the principle that PDSs cultivate a context where inservice teacher learning is an expectation and norm. Furthermore, clinical pedagogies such as inquiry, lesson study, and co-teaching have been proven as tools for creating shared spaces for collaborative teacher learning within PDSs. Teachers acknowledged that their learning was advanced by collaboration, professionalism, and instructional practice and that the PDS was recognized as supporting shifts in instructional practice. Although intern learning appears as a focus in 24 dissertations, findings are plagued by a lack of common language and inconclusive findings. However, the dissertations studying intern learning speak positively about the PDS structure as a support for the development of interns as educators.

After reviewing the dissertations that examine PDS learning (in the areas of inquiry, PreK-12 learning, teacher educator learning, inservice teacher learning, and intern/teacher candidate learning), for content analysis, it is a good time to reexamine the question, *is the past prologue?* and focus on what these dissertations can teach us about the direction of PDS research and the standing of PDS as a viable and even exemplary approach to clinical practice. With fewer PDS-focused dissertations being written in more recent years, we wonder if the complexity of PDS may be a deterrent to the growth and sustainability of this model? Since the beginning of this study, we have identified an additional 50 PDS dissertations to examine and have cast a wider net to include dissertations focusing on school university partnerships. We hope that these additional dissertations will help us more fully address this question.

While AACTE (2018) identifies PDS as an exemplary partnership model, they also ask for research to support additional claims about PDS experiences that need more attention, including improved quality or frequency of formative assessment for candidates and improved quality of college/university courses. They also recognize an example of helpful research in an empirical study that finds PDS experiences encourage greater professional confidence in teacher candidates, result in candidates with more demonstrable teaching skills, and even produce greater PK-12 student achievement (Snow, 2015). From the current exploration of PDS dissertations, most especially from the comparison studies, we have learned that we still do not have a clear path to presenting PDS as having a positive impact when compared with non-PDS experiences. However, we are beginning to understand the types of studies that are needed to move this agenda forward and hope our work will help inform the PDS community of some next steps.

We believe that this is an exciting time for PDSs, and we hope that our dissertation studies will help guide future research. NAPDS, in collaboration with the AERA PDS Research Special Interest Group, has developed a PDS Research Relations Liaison position to elevate and amplify PDS research at the national level (Ogletree, 2018). AACTE (2018) and NCATE (2010) position PDSs to be leaders in developing and actualizing teacher education reform. In fact, the release of the white paper, *A Pivot Toward Clinical Practice, Its Lexicon and the Renewal of Educator Preparation* from the Clinical Practice Commission (2018) identifies PDSs as exemplars for developing the essential collaborative contexts between schools and universities to prepare the next generation of educators. The report also focuses on PK-12 learning and the “creation of powerful research and development agendas and systematic gathering and use of data to support continuous improvement in teacher preparation” (p. 6). More recently, the authors participated in the AERA-Georgia State University Research Conference Advancing PDS Research: Exploring a Collaborative National Research Agenda where we shared our dissertation studies and participated in a robust discussion of the direction of PDS research.
As we close this initial investigation of PDS dissertations, we wonder how can we use this work to build a coalition for PDS research? We believe that a further study that more thoroughly investigates the results of the dissertation comparison studies will help us isolate the positive trends in PDS research. This will hopefully open discussions about needed future comparison studies to examine PDS impact.

We also hope to begin a university level conversation to determine why there are fewer PDS dissertations over time and how we can address this trend. We wonder why so few dissertations focus on inquiry in PDSs when this is an important aspect of PDS work for interns and PDS teachers.

When we have exhausted our dissertation analysis, we hope to turn our direction to PDS and school university publications to further understand the research in these areas and to be able to inform the future of PDS research.

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**Further reading**


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