

**BUILDING TEACHER TEAMS:
A MODEL FOR TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

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Dedication

This research paper is dedicated

to

Leanne, Nicholas, and Sebastian Kilcommons

Without your constant love, support, and understanding

this would not have been possible.

Abstract

This paper is the culmination of a three year sojourn back into the world of academic rigor. It is a reflection, from an historical perspective, on changes in the educational processes that have been personally experienced as a result of the implementation of The Team Initiative, whereby grade level teachers plan together to promote student learning. After putting the initiative into context as one manifestation of the Total Quality Management movement, I catalogued the events that transpired in 1996-97 which helped develop the team concept in Holy Trinity Academy in Okotoks, Alberta.

The case study of events attempts to answer the question: How can teacher teams be formed and maintained in a school setting? Specifically, I wanted to find out, what processes help build teacher teams that are successful? The second half of the problem challenges: What are the measures by which success of teacher teams can be evaluated?

This project derived its original impetus from an initiative directed by the Superintendent and the school board of the Christ the Redeemer School Division to build teacher teams. Fashioned after the principles of the strategic planning process called Total Quality Management, the Team Initiative offers a specific plan for teachers to improve student learning. Data was formally collected throughout the year by means of three staff questionnaires, team meeting minutes, and two professional development days which focused on team building. Informally, data was

collected on a continuous basis through meetings and discussions with staff members, and my own anecdotal records.

Very generally stated, the research questions ask: What works or does not work when building teacher teams? and, How successful are the teacher teams studied at Holy Trinity Academy? Very generally answered, the responses to the study indicate that we can determine processes that seem to be effective, just as we can determine processes that are not effective. Furthermore, by many standards the findings suggest that the teams studied do enjoy a significant degree of success.

Acknowledgments

When I embarked on this journey once again through the Hallowed Halls of Academia, it was - as with my Bachelor of Education degree - a wonderful excursion into a land of knowledge and enlightenment which has evoked both trepidation and fulfillment. I have had the distinct pleasure of having many guides on this second journey, but I would especially like to recognize Professor Richard Butt and Professor Frank Sovka for their direction and extreme patience.

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Chapter I

Rationale and Statement of the Problem

The course of even just the last twenty years has seen great changes in education and schools. Amidst the advent of the 'new math', computers, whole language, and the back to basics movement, there has been one underlying current which is now challenging the very nature by which we instruct our students.

'Accountability', the rally cry of the decade - a word at once challenged and feared by educators, and embraced by parents and politicians - has prompted serious reflection on our educational system. It has forced teachers and parents alike to examine the means by which we provide 'learning' for tomorrow's generation, and has dictated, in many cases, the road we will now endeavour to travel.

Heavily influenced by the promises of 'Total Quality Management' espoused by corporate gurus, schools are adopting the 'client-based' action plans which promise 'customer happiness' and successful (profitable?) education ventures. This document examines the phenomenon of Total Quality Management as it has been manifested in Holy Trinity Academy in Okotoks Alberta. Specifically, this paper examines the Team Initiative in this Southern Alberta school, as it has been implemented in our own quest for excellence.

Problem

This two part problem will address first a means by which teacher teams can be formed. The challenge is to provide a solution to the query: How can teacher teams be formed and maintained in a school setting? Specifically, what are the processes that will result in successful implementation of teacher teams? Secondly, the first problem challenges: What are the measures by which ‘success’ of teacher teams can be evaluated?

Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. What are the processes that work and do not work in facilitating Team Building in Holy Trinity Academy?
2. What is the quality of the grade seven and eight teams and what are the impacts of the teams?

Significance of the Study

In it’s final analysis, it is expected that this study will shed some light not only on the means by which teacher teams can be ‘built’ within a district, but also provide direction which will indicate the inherent value of this system of management in education, as evidenced by efficiency and effectiveness, and ultimately, teacher satisfaction and student achievement.

In the Christ the Redeemer Separate School District, where the Team Initiative has been a mainstay of the educational process for the last four years, this study will catalogue in some perpetuity the means by which the team concept has been implemented in the 1996-96 school year. Of considerably greater importance, this endeavour may justify the expense of time, money, and human resource which has been dedicated to this ongoing project.

Research Design

In brief, this project follows the various methods - both formal and informal - by which teacher teams have been formed and maintained at Holy Trinity Academy, especially during the 1996-97 school year. The focus tends to be on the grade seven teacher team and the grade eight teacher team in this school which houses grades six through twelve. This limiting decision is quite reasonable for the purposes of this study because of factors which make these two teams quite distinct in comparison to the other teams in the school. The formal procedures used to build teams includes new teacher orientation, professional development for the express purpose of building teams, and team meetings which focus on procedures, norms, and team expectations. Informal methods by which teams are built and maintained include various interactions between individuals, including team members, members of other teams, and administration.

Some effort has been made to provide a thorough review of pertinent literature regarding Total Quality Management, and more specifically the Team Initiative. An

historical sketch puts the Christ the Redeemer's adoption of these two into perspective as a natural product of the melding of business-sense and education.

Qualitative data collected will suggest further direction for this and other school districts as we approach the next millennium. Quantitative data may provide quite a compelling case in favour of the Team Initiative.

Hypothesis

It is the considered opinion of the author that the methods by which teams are formed and maintained at Holy Trinity academy are very effective. A relation of the events which transpired throughout the school year should show means to build unity, efficiency, and effectiveness in teacher teams which is at once logical and practical.

In terms of the measures by which success of the team(s) can be evaluated, this study will necessarily have to be predominantly qualitative, based on subjective responses from the teachers within the teams. Although there can once again be a case made for bias in the sample, it is this very bias which will indicate the success or failure of the team initiative in the perception of the individuals within the team(s). Some efforts will be made to quantify the teacher responses to two separate questionnaires. These numerical responses should lend themselves to evaluation and comparison which may suggest a favorable response to the Team Initiative.

Definition of Terms

A dictionary of terms associated with Total Quality Management appears below. As with any area of specialty, quality has its own vocabulary, its own particular way of using even ordinary words.

Customer

Anyone to whom you (personally, your department, or the company) provide service, product or information.

Incentives

Not a part of the quality process. There is no attempt to “buy” anyone’s participation; the employees of the company are worth far more than could be afforded. There will be a sincere effort at saying “thank-you” for participation in the process.

Quality

The result of the combination of two interlaced concepts: Quality in fact and Quality in perception. Also it is the competitive edge that will help to insure that a company not only survives, but succeeds.

Quality in Fact

Meeting specifications as they are understood; achieved when a person does his or her job as he or she believes it should be done.

Quality in Perception

Achieved when someone else believes that what is being offered will meet their expectations, that it will do or be what they want. The key to quality is to insure

that the specifications meet the expectations of the customer. If they do not, the gap must first be recognized and explained, and then worked on, either by changing the specifications or educating the expectations.

Quality Team Leader

The leader of a group of employees attempting to improve the quality of whatever it is they do now; the Quality Team Leader is trained in the quality process and in how to conduct a meeting in a participative, problem-solving manner. Quality Team Leaders will be the primary activists in an effort to put the company on the road to a philosophy of continuous improvement.

Task Force

A group of employees that can be cross-functional and/or cross-level depending on the problem that serves as a catalyst for their formation. This temporary team will normally disband once a solution is agreed to and implementation is assured.

Team

A group of people with a high degree of interdependence, geared toward the achievement of a goal or the completion of a task.

Value Analysis

A program that is an integral portion of the quality process. Working with a trained facilitator, a department will take an in-depth look at their functions and processes. Recommendations that result from a Value Analysis Workshop will be the sole property of the workshop participants, not the workshop facilitator.

Summary

It is the opinion of the researcher that there are methods whereby teams can be created. That is, a team of teachers can be a successful construct, as opposed to only happening naturally or by chance. This paper will address means to achieve the desired successful team status, and furthermore, will suggest methods of evaluation which will support the team initiative as being not only viable, but valuable.

In the following chapter an attempt will be made to provide a contextual basis for continuous improvement in an educational setting in the specific form of teacher teams.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Total Quality Management, or TQM, is one of possibly dozens of titles or acronyms which are used to describe the principles which have evolved from W.A. Shewhart's work on statistical quality control. TQM, initiated by The University of North Dakota, lends itself to this paper because of the obvious educational applications. Other designates - Hewlett Packard's *Quest for Total Quality*, Ford's *Total Quality Excellence* program and a favorite among the 'learned practitioners', *Strategic Quality Management* - are potential evidence of the universal appeal of this management philosophy and structural system. In this paper, Total Quality Management will be used to refer to the entire 'family' of like thoughts.

A Brief History of the Total Quality Management Theory

In 1990, Dr. Joseph M. Juran, a pioneer in the field of quality improvement, gave an address in which he made reference to the 'Taylor System', as it had affected the American worker. In his speech, Juran criticized the Taylor system of separating planning from execution, which has been prevalent in the Western world for the greater part of this century. The Taylor system evolved about a century ago, and its major premise was that the supervisors and workers of that earlier era lacked the education to plan how work should be done. Hence, the planning was turned over to engineers, while the responsibility of carrying out the plans was left to the supervisors

and workers. Juran contended that during our century education levels have increased sharply, and have thereby destroyed the major premise of the Taylor system. Juran further purported that business was failing to take advantage of its biggest under-utilized asset - the education, experience, and creativity of the work force. He suggested that self-managing worker teams would become the dominant successor to the Taylor system.

Upon reading the segment above, one could hardly be chided for thinking that Total Quality Management was a relatively new concept - the next “better-and-even-more-innovative answer,” designed to rescue the ailing American workplace. Upon closer scrutiny, we discover that such is not the case. Total Quality Management does have its roots as a philosophy and structural system born of North American industry, but that was some seventy years ago, after which it was exported to Japan, only to resurface on this continent again in the early nineteen-eighties (Seymour, 1992).

The history of this trans-pacific evolution is documented in the book *Managing Quality* by David Garvin (1988). He contends that there have been four major quality eras, starting with “inspection” and moving to “strategic quality management”.

Garvin suggests that prior to the Industrial Revolution, quality was viewed as the natural result of the application of individual skills by an artisan or crafter. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution however, and the inherent mass production and need for interchangeable parts, the responsibility for quality fell on the shoulders of another individual - one who stood at the end of the production line - the inspector.

Inspection consisted mainly of identifying defects, as measured by simple activities such as counting and grading.

The second era, that of *statistical quality control*, is accredited to a statistician at Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1931. This statistician - W. A. Shewhart - has been indicated by Garvin as the first person to actually apply the fundamental theories of probability and statistics to production. Shewhart observed that it was statistically and practically impossible to have two parts manufactured to exactly the same specifications. Many different factors could influence the outcome to some degree: determinants such as the raw materials used, worker skills, or equipment could affect the product. From the perspective of the manager then, the focus changed. He no longer tried to decide whether or not variance existed, but rather, whether the variance was a resultant of the production process, or could it be attributed to something (or someone) specific. The impact was resounding. No longer was it necessary to inspect 100 percent of the products on an assembly line to determine the quality. Rather, using statistical techniques, the determination could be made in advance based on samples taken from the line. The idea was to build in quality as a control mechanism, rather than checking or inspecting for quality after the fact.

The third era elevated quality control from its original restrictions of being primarily statistical and confined to manufacturing. *Quality Assurance* marked an effort to raise the prevention of problems beyond that of a mathematical function on the factory floor to the level of management. Three gentlemen especially - Joseph Juran, Philip Crosby, and W. Edwards Deming - are commonly associated with

contributions to this field, suggesting that the entire production process, not just the production line, had an effect on quality. That is to say, quality can be controlled from the implementation of the design right down to its marketing. In essence, managers could take practical and non-technical steps to improve quality.

This message was taken to heart most adamantly by the Japanese soon after World War II. At that time, Japan was floundering in a state of economical turmoil. W. Edwards Deming was invited in 1950 to act as a private consultant for some of Japan's largest companies. The statistical techniques advocated in American industry were quickly adopted. More importantly, the message that building in quality was more than a set of statistical tools was appealing and desirable. Deming encouraged the Japanese to adopt a systematic approach to problem solving, and along with Juran, continued to broaden the message to include consumer research, goal-setting, and organizational issues. As reported by Seymour (1992), "The Japanese not only listened, they learned. They also adopted, innovated, and produced a few of their own quality gurus. The quality assurance era flourished in Japan." (Seymour, 1992)

The fourth quality era, *strategic quality management* may have its origin in an American documentary produced in 1980 called "If Japan Can ... Why Can't We?". In the documentary Deming explained that by increasing quality, a company reduced scrap and rework, thereby decreasing cost and increasing productivity (Seymour, 1992).

During the program he once again lectured that “quality is the most highly leveraged investment an organization can make and there is a system for making it happen” (Seymour, 1992).

This exposure helped to march in the new, and latest era of quality management. Quality came to be perceived as a leadership function that could be implemented into the daily affairs of an organization. Quality was being included in the strategic planning process and in financial planning - it could thus be linked directly to profitability. Quality also evolved to a point where it was viewed not only from internal standards, but from external points of view: the customers version of quality.

Total Quality Management: The Business Plan

In practice today, Total Quality Management as a philosophy often centers around five primary areas: mission and customer focus; systematic approach to operations; vigorous development of human resources; long-term thinking; and commitment (Scherr and Teeter, 1991).

- **Mission and Customer Focus**

Scherr and Lozier (1991) indicate that “virtually every successful company has a driving desire to focus on satisfying customer needs” (Scherr and Teeter, 1991). They contend that these companies recognize that the most important part of any organization is the customer, and that to capture and hold customers you must satisfy their needs. Paramount to this is the necessity to identify the customer, which they

suggest can often be accomplished through the organization's mission statement. A mission statement is the guide by which a team can plan its goals and objectives. A strong mission statement should be clear, concise, and should state the overriding purpose of the organization or team. A successful mission statement will have a clause linking it to the organization's primary directive. Logically then, if a group recognizes customers as having apriori significance, this will be reflected in the mission statement.

Knowing both the mission statement and the customers will make it feasible and worthwhile to measure performance against stated purposes. Measurement provides feedback and allows the organization to enact successive changes that improve quality.

- Systematic Approach to Operations

Total Quality Management requires systematic and continuous - as opposed to random - improvement of the dimensions of quality. The Shewart (1931) cycle - plan-do-check-act (PDCA) - offers a scientific method for continuous process improvement:

Plan: Identify a process in need of improvement, analyze the problems, and develop a proposal for change that will cause some type of improvement.

Do: Run an experiment with the proposed change.

Check: Collect data to determine if the experiment produced the desired change.

Act: If the experiment is successful, implement the idea more broadly; if not, learn from the mistake and try an alternative (Shewart, 1931).

It should be noted that advances in science and knowledge are just as often made through the rejection of a hypotheses as are made through the acceptance of said hypotheses. That is to say, 'failures' can be just as important as 'victories' if we learn from them.

Additionally, the PDCA cycle should be thought of as a continuous loop going from one proposal and experiment to the next. The goal of any organization should be to make their processes both stable and predictable - in other words, in control - but at the same time it is not static. It is in a constant state of flux, ever looking for improvement and a more valuable use of its resources.

- Vigorous Development of Human Resources

A crucial element in developing the area of human resources is empowerment. Simply put, empowerment suggests that the employees closest to the impact of a decision have a critical role to play in the determination of that decision. The "XY" theory suggests that there are two kinds of behavior in the workplace, and that people predominantly work in one mode or the other. X behavior is to do as little as possible, while doing as much as is necessary to keep the boss off your back. According to that theory, the more the boss rides an employee, the more production (short term) will be done. Y behavior is, given the choices and the resources, and minimal intervention from the boss, you will perform to, and expand, your potential.

According to this theory, the more opportunity there is to substantially contribute to what is done and how, the more will be accomplished (Campbell, 1993).

There are many other factors which contribute to this phenomenon. One of the most important is the Pygmalion Effect. It suggests that when people are expected to be able to do well, and that they will do well, they do. The converse is that far too often people believe that others have limited expectations of their abilities, and they will therefore perform to the level of those perceived expectations. A major premise of the Total Quality Management approach is that teamwork provides greatly expanded opportunities for participation in the decisions that affect the workplace, and thus there is an expectation that team members can and will perform strongly in the team environment.

- Long Term Thinking

The authors of *Total Quality Management in Higher Education* credit Drucker (1974) with a concise and yet complete description of long term thinking: Long term thinking is molding the future by understanding the consequences of what we do today. Long-term thinking requires a willingness to forgo short-term benefits that undermine future well-being. Such thinking is congruent with knowing our mission and focusing on our customers, with systematic improvement, and continuous development of human resources (Sherr and Teeter, 1991).

- Commitment

Ensuring quality must be a priority, and a universally accepted one at that. It cannot be delegated, everyone must become involved in improving and maintaining

the quality of the organization. Further, the commitment must be consistent, as mentioned above, to ensure continuous progress.

The Transition: TQM to Teacher Teams

The concept of working together to accomplish a specific, hopefully greater, goal has existed for well over a millennium, yet the understanding and development of this concept has only recently been in vogue. As organizations grew and became more complex there needed to be a system of improved communications and practice; one of these systems was the work team, or team (Dyer, 1987). These work teams would share a common purpose and be directed to achieve a specific task in an efficient and collegial manner. Yet, it is surprising the lack of direction and cohesiveness that many organizations faced due to the lack of understanding or sheer ignorance of the great potential that lay within the employees themselves.

Today there is a growing movement afoot to reorganize into cells or teams that would not only work closely together but also share in the overall decision making for that particular enterprise. Managers have seen the benefits of having employees actually planning together and motivating each other to a higher standard of excellence than has been previously achieved. Large American conglomerates have also seen the light and include extensive training on work teams and collaboration within the workplace (Senge, 1990).

A natural adjunct to this concept would be the implementation and monitoring of this concept within an educational framework. The “egalitarian ethic” presupposes

that a teacher is a teacher and that there is no need to change any of the constructs around the teacher or even to change the ethos of the teacher himself (Lieberman, 1988). In days gone by there was little questioning of the intent or actions of a professional teacher, and parents often worked in synchronization with whatever the teacher directed. Fortunately, these days are gone and parents now have a very significant and meaningful role in the education of their child. Along with a greater interest and involvement came a stronger drive among teachers to work in consort with parents and other teachers (Groves, 1995) in order to ensure that the child gained the best possible education.

Research in the available literature regarding the implementation of teams and empowered decision making has centered around the aspect of dealing with the current reality of bureaucratic school organizations and the need for reform (Simkins, 1995). The research reviewed can be divide into several themes that help to define the current trends regarding teams and decision making. These themes are:

- 1) The need to empower employees that are closely linked with a particular decision.
- 2) The need for training teachers and teacher leaders in response to the shift in decision making responsibilities.
- 3) The necessity for greater communication between all levels of professional staff in order to build trust and confidence in this type of system.
- 4) The requirement for some senior administrative officers to provide ongoing technical support, leadership, and motivation for the team concept.

5) The definition of goals within the team environment and a clearly recognizable “vision” of what the current learning environment is and where it is going.

These themes will provide the basis for interpretation of the literature reviewed. These themes also represent areas in which all organizations can develop their own empowerment and decision making model.

It is useful to incorporate some of the beliefs of the corporate world and apply them to the fundamental beliefs of the educational realm. A corporate definition of self-managing teams is that they are groups of interdependent individuals who can self-regulate their behaviour on relatively whole tasks (Cohen and Ledford, 1994). Their measures of group performance, group satisfaction, and group behaviours revealed that working in a collaborative setting allowed for more depth in understanding of complex problems and a more focused approach on gaining a solution.

Conceivably, these are all key components to the effectiveness of educational teams, and the interconnectedness of the corporate and educational fields should not be taken lightly.

Empowering Teachers

There are many fundamental reasons why a shift towards the empowerment of teachers is not only a functional way of doing things better, but also a common sense approach to making the school organization more effective. According to Neil

Malvetti (1995), the reasons for shifting the center of power includes better ideas for improvement, increased commitment, enhanced communication, and a greater satisfaction [of work] among those involved. Certainly the implications of a staff that is working in consort with each other and growing together as a cohesive unit cannot be taken lightly.

Another facet of team empowerment is the interconnectedness of the decisions they will make (Malvetti, 1995). A grade 7 teacher who has had a great deal of success with a particular grammar series may promote the purchase and integration of this series to other staff members. Sharing the wealth of experience among the professional teachers is another avenue that allows the empowered teachers to take control of their work environment and help others in the process (Carter and Powell, 1982).

The creation of teacher teams has provided a necessary framework in order to allow effective decision making to take place. There are several characteristics of high performing teams according to Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993):

- 1) Shared sense of purpose and vision;
- 2) Open, thoughtful communication;
- 3) Trust and mutual dependence;
- 4) Useful creative conflict; and
- 5) Appropriate leadership.

Murgatroyd and Morgan also go on to explain the effective behaviours needed for effective decision making within a team structure, including reflection, linking

with other teams, promoting ideas, and being innovative. Such completeness of a team is not easily had or won, and many difficult hurdles must be cleared in order to achieve such a model as the one above.

Finally, the point made by Barry Groves (1995) in his article “Educational Excellence Through Empowered Employees”, that “working collegially creates a synergy that is greater than the sum of its parts”, drives home the whole essence of the existence of teams. Distributing aspects of decision making control is not enough, however, and there must be a balance struck with other key components before a school can achieve the mastery and fluency of the empowerment model it is striving towards.

Teacher Retraining

In order to make a decision making model based on teamwork, a school organization must also take the time for leadership and management training (Boehlje, 1995). This training is a necessary support that will expose teachers and teacher leaders to a myriad of qualities for appropriate and effective decision making. Holy Trinity Academy has embraced the value of teacher empowerment and has recruited the firm, Donald A. Campbell and Associates to train teachers on an ongoing basis. In their Team Manual (Campbell, 1993), this firm recognizes the areas of communication, leadership, goal-setting, and conflict resolution as elements requiring ongoing clarification and enhancement. The value of teacher retraining can also be measured in the amount of confidence and effectiveness that will result, and

how this newly established role will often re-energize more experienced teachers (Simkins, 1995).

Improved Communication

The importance of increased and more meaningful communication amongst staff members is another element that gains focus as a result of collaboration. Several researchers elaborated on the need to expand the network within schools, including supporting each other to make a difference to their students and themselves (Carter and Powell, 1992). Other research has indicated that three factors drive the need for greater communication: motivation, ability to de-center, and greater confidence when applying a knowledge base to decision making (Maznaveski, 1994). Personal skill development like these and the ability of teachers to seek each others' advice allows the administrators to support the idea that any problem can be worked out among the teachers first (Lieberman, 1988). A major adjunct to the success of any team is being able to work effectively together. This is well highlighted by Roland S. Barth, who purports that the formation of a school team requires the development of group process skills and utilizing resources at all levels (Barth, 1991).

The realm of responsibility for communication is contended in Boyd Boehlje's (1994) article entitled "Share the Decision-Making", in which he states, "The communication responsibilities of team members should be set out clearly in each team's written bylaws, charter, guidelines, or procedures". He also touches on the legal implications of empowerment and suggests that these should be heeded

meticulously by all participants to ensure that success is not marred by the ignorance of civil laws.

Support and Leadership

Support for teacher empowerment and shared decision making from higher level administration is critical (Parker and Damico, 1989). Although this research revolves around decentralization and the empowerment of others, it certainly has been gleaned from the research that leadership is key to set up an enabling process for empowered teachers (Knoop, 1995). Administrators can instill that sense of risk-taking and confidence in teachers that will metamorphosize into exciting teamwork, and progressive classrooms (Maeroff, 1993).

The role of the administrator bears great importance as well when it comes time to nurture teams into making effective decisions. Release time, technical training, workshops, and including the parent community in the process are all elements of the team process (Scott, 1992). Another important role for the principal is outlined as being able to distinguish between working smarter as opposed to harder, and to strike a balance between productivity and the depletion of school resources (Donaldson, 1993). Above all, motivation and support is imperative from Division and School Board level individuals. This coupled with public support fosters the necessary climate for growth within a school system.

Finally, Leadership is about providing opportunities and possibilities for the future (Blake, 1987). In today's educational world, the need for effective leadership has never been so critical.

Vision

The reason that such an important component as vision is listed last is a symbolic reflection that it forms the center of these five "pillars" without which the whole concept of working and deciding together would be nonexistent. Peter Senge (1990) provides a marvelous interpretation of what vision is when he states that "shared vision is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus for energy and learning". Vision is paramount, as it provides not only direction, but also gives the empowered employee the sense that she is a part of a larger, greater purpose, states Mark Sanborn (1992) in his video entitled, Team Building: How to Motivate People .

Canadian researcher Stephen Murgatroyd has proposed three distinct functions of vision (Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993). These are:

- 1) The vision should become the basis for encouraging, enabling, empowering, and developing staff members. This reflects the need for a support system and framework for teaching professionals.
- 2) The Vision statement should act as a cornerstone for decision making. This allows all members of an educational team to be involved at a 'grass roots' level of the formation of the team, and will motivate them further into action.

3) The vision enables the entire school to have a common reference point for focusing their energies. This last statement reflects the need for a sense of community and purpose within an organization that a clear vision can promote.

The most important feature of vision for a teacher making critical decisions is that their input allows them to gain a better understanding of themselves, their peers, and of the students they teach. Peter Senge (1990) best states it when he says, "What a vision actually does is more important than what a vision actually is". With these criteria in place, the vision can become self-fulfilling and self-sustaining.

Total Quality Management in an Educational Setting: Part 1

Although firmly grounded in an industry setting, it seems that Total Quality Management may have some values which warrant application in an educational setting. The proponents of Total Quality Management suggest that as a process and a philosophy it espouses the value of people. It empowers all individuals involved and encourages less management control. An effort is made to reduce costs, but not in an authoritarian manner. Rather, it has checks and balances which it is hoped will indicate intelligent allocation of funds and manpower.

The process also encourages - in fact nearly demands - a need for all individuals to use their knowledge. The plan suggests that most people in organizations know where problems lie in their own work processes. Empowerment

and responsibility is given to these people to make intelligent and thoughtful suggestions or decisions with regard to applications that affect them.

Lastly, what is education itself - our ultimate mission - but continuous improvement through learning? The quintessential building block of both education and Total Quality Management is continuous improvement. It seems that this simultaneously desirable end must have a means common to both efforts.

A Case for Quality in Education as Teamwork

Teams have been a part of social cultures as long as they have existed. Specialization is possible because of the team concept. Not all people do all tasks equally well, nor do we all share the same body of knowledge. It is because of each individual's unique qualities that each person is valuable as a team member.

Research has suggested that teams in the workplace can positively influence: higher product and service quality, greater productivity, improved performance, faster and more effective change implementation, significantly decreased costs, and increased customer satisfaction (Campbell, 1993).

In an educational setting, this may translate into: improved instructional quality, better grasps of the curriculum objectives (by the students) and enrichment thereof, increased grades, fast and efficient adaptations to changing curricula, more efficient use of resources, and increased customer satisfaction - students, parents, educators, and administration.

Teams in any workplace have a direct link to quality initiatives, and may be the ideal vehicle for ensuring continuous improvement. These key questions, although not an exhaustive list, incorporate a number of the key items teams must address at each team meeting:

- What are we doing to ensure quality in what we do?
- How do we know the quality of the results we produce?
- How can we improve our results?
- What are the limits to how well we can do?
- What can we do to change those limits?

Although the questions are generalizable for any setting, they can have specific regard for a team of teachers. A math department for example, trying to improve results on the standardized achievement test distributed by Alberta Education, would incorporate each of these thought provoking questions into its discussion.

Total Quality Management in an Educational Setting: Part 2

The question begs to be asked then, are there potential downsides to implementing a Total Quality Management process in a school environment? Obviously they exist.

A great number of considerations must be taken into account. The aspects which are addressed immediately below are determined by the very nature of the Total Quality Management process which involves teamwork, and more specifically,

requires participation. The potential faults - just as the merits - are not necessarily part of the process, but rather its implementation by individuals. The following is a list of potential pros and cons for participation in a team setting.

- Participation may result in better decisions. In a school setting, teachers may often have information that administrators are not privy to. Furthermore, participation in teams allows a variety of different views to be aired. *On the other hand*, teachers may be less informed than administrators and the premises upon which they make their decisions may be different. Furthermore, if decisions are made by groups, reaction to changing environments may be particularly slow.
- People are more likely to implement ideas that they have made themselves. Not only do they know better what is expected of them, but helping make a decision commits one to it. *On the other hand*, once becoming committed to a decision, employees may be reluctant to change it.
- The mere process of participation may satisfy such non-pecuniary needs as creativity, achievement, and social approval. *On the other hand*, not everyone has strong desires for creativity and achievement, or they may satisfy these sufficiently off the job.
- Participation may improve communications and cooperation. *On the other hand*, participation can be time consuming.
- Participation enhances people's sense of power and dignity. *On the other hand*, once a precedent is established, withdrawal of the "right" to participate becomes difficult.

- Participation increases loyalty and identification with the organization, especially if the team's suggestions are implemented. *On the other hand*, cohesive, participative teams could conceivably unite against administration to restrict progress or resist change.
- Participation teaches new skills and helps to identify and train new leaders. *On the other hand*, as participation takes place in a team or group setting, a new element is added: group pressure to conform to decisions adopted (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1992).

Summary

The literature available seems to provide a compelling case for the Total Quality Management approach to education, especially as it can be demonstrated through a model of empowered teacher teams. Chapter III will explore methods and procedures to create such a situation.

Chapter III

Methods and Procedures

History and Development

Holy Trinity Academy is a relatively small Separate Catholic School in Okotoks - a community of about 8000 people - in Southern Alberta. Four hundred eighty seven students are registered in grades 6 through 12. With a professional staff of 28.5, the student / teacher ratios are favorable at an average of approximately 17 students per teacher. In actuality, class sizes are consistently in the mid to low twenties, which again is conducive to high teacher / student interaction. Holy Trinity Academy is a rapidly expanding school, as can be attested to by the growth over the past five years: in the Fall of 1992 the doors of the school opened to 175 students in grades 7 through 10, with a professional teaching staff of eleven.

In a few short years, Holy Trinity Academy has developed a legitimate reputation as an academic school. Student achievement on grade 9 provincial exams and grade 12 diploma exams is consistently high.

In June of 1993, the superintendent, in conjunction with trustees and a few 'key' teachers, developed a plan for the Team Initiative in what was known in pre-amalgamation days known as the Foothills Catholic School District #346. (Since that time regionalization with other small districts has resulted in the formation of the Christ the Redeemer Separate School District #3). Originally described as a "quality

enhancing” project in the district, the undertaking evolved into a philosophy - the way things are done in this particular district.

A reproduction of the Team Charter Committee Meeting agenda is included in the appendix (see appendix A). The direction provided by the Team Charter Committee dictated a number of guidelines which would ensure a common focus for the separate teams. Put into a question and answer format, those initial guidelines were shared with the team leaders on August 23, 1993, and are shared with new teachers at an orientation session each August. The guidelines are as follows:

Why the team initiative?

to have in place a continuous process to improve student learning

How does the team initiative work?

teachers at a given grade level meet on a weekly basis to study student progress and devise mini experiments to improve it

What do the teams involve themselves with?

student achievement in areas that are measurable and that are outlined in the program of studies or Board policy

What measures of student achievement are available?

Raw data:

- a) results of mini tests of skills and facts
- b) reading comprehension tests
- c) listening skills tests
- d) writing samples

- e) reports, essays
- f) multiple choice question results

Standardized test results:

- a) provincial achievement test results
- b) CTBS - Canadian Test of Basic Skills results
- c) other standardized test results as required

How often should various areas be discussed?

setting the agenda becomes an extremely important part of the team process
all significant areas of the curriculum should get on the agenda over a three or
four week period

What are the general principles which guide the team's work?

- a) Education starts with a study of the learner.
- b) Focus on student achievement, not on teacher methodology. When achievement is weak, change what the teacher does.
- c) Learning is individual. Look at each student separately.
- d) Have a plan in hand to deal with the variance. Does the whole group get the treatment over, or only certain students?
- e) There is no substitute for leadership. Leaders recognize problems and move the group towards solutions.
- f) Record successful innovations and incorporate them into the way we do things.
- g) Complete the loop:

weakness ⇒ revised methodology ⇒ testing ⇒ strength ⇒ incorporate

or: testing ⇒ weakness ⇒ try again

h) Prioritize.

i) Develop your own professional development.

j) Coordinate with other grades and teams.

These notes for team leaders above have provided the basis for team development for four years within the district across all grade levels.

Participants

This research project deals specifically with the development of the grade 7 and 8 teacher teams at Holy Trinity Academy in the 1996-97 school year. Each team consists of four teachers, responsible for the education of 90 and 97 students respectively. The self-imposed limitation of following the development of only two of the potential teams within the school is rational and logical in light of the circumstances surrounding the other possible choices: Grade 6 consists of only one class of 27 students and thus one teacher; the team concept does not apply. Grades 9 through 12 are structured into teams by subject area, creating a more traditional 'department' model. These subject area teams in the high school have similar form and function, but their operation is less cohesive, as often there is only one teacher giving instruction at a particular level. For example, in the Science team there are three individuals, one teaching all of the biology and chemistry, one teaching physics and general science in grades 9 and 10, and a third who picks up a little of each. As

there is considerably less overlap than is enjoyed by a grade eight team of four generalists, a reasonable analysis where the two teams are compared and contrasted would be problematic.

The eight participants in the study are described briefly as follows:

- A - female, grade 8 team leader, 27 years old, 5 years teaching experience, three years in current district. A has been a member of the grade eight team each year that she has been at Holy Trinity Academy, and this is her second year as Team Leader.
- B - male, grade 8 teacher, 25 years old, 2 years teaching experience, both in this district. B has been a member of the grade 8 team during both of his years at Holy Trinity Academy.
- C - female, grade 8 teacher, 23 years old, first year teacher
- D - female, grade 8 teacher, 22 years old, first year teacher, filling maternity leave position for the entire year
- E - male, grade 7 team leader, 25 years old, second year teacher, both years in this district as a grade 7 teacher, and thus, a member of the grade 7 team. This is his first year as team leader.
- F - male, grade 7 teacher, 43 years old, ten years teaching experience, first year in this district, returning to teaching after a four year sojourn into business. F has never been part of a formal teaching team and admittedly entered into the position with some reservations. He expressed concern that the homeroom concept (below) takes teachers out of their specialty area, and further

suggested that the Team concept may lead to increased meeting time, and increased workload.

G - female, grade 7 teacher, 25 years old, first year in this district, two previous years teaching experience in Nicaragua. G has no experience teaching in a formal Team.

H - Male, grade 7 teacher, 30 years old, first year teacher.

All eight of the teachers have their own homeroom class. In tandem with the team initiative, the district has adopted the 'homeroom' concept for grades 6 through 8, suggesting that as much as possible each teacher is a generalist who will teach as many subjects as possible to his or her own homeroom class. This as opposed to another common model whereby subject specialists deliver instruction to a number of different homerooms.

Instrumentation

Various instruments have been used throughout the school year to collect data. Predominantly, data has been retrieved through direct interaction and questioning of the team members in both formal settings i.e. team meetings, and in informal settings i.e. queries and discussions, instigated by either teacher or researcher (principal). Once each month, the principal, vice-principal and each of the team leaders (grade 7, grade 8, and the core subjects in high school) meet to share developments and offer updates.

The 'hard' data collected includes agendas and minutes of team meetings and professional development activities, and responses to three formal questionnaires (see appendices B, C and D).

The first questionnaire (Appendix B) consisted of open-ended responses to queries about eight different aspects of the team initiative in Holy Trinity Academy. The questions were deliberately designed as open-ended in an effort to promote unsolicited response while avoiding researcher bias. Typically, questions asked for the respondent's perceptions of the various aspects of the team initiative, including qualitative judgments regarding effectiveness of said aspects. The survey anticipates and demands a high degree of subjectivity in order to accurately reflect the opinions of the teachers.

The second questionnaire (Appendix C) identifies a number of teamwork practices, and asks the participant to 'rate' his or her own team on a scale from 0 to 5, where 5 represents strong agreement with the statement, and 0 suggests that the statement is not true at all for the particular team. The questionnaire has a distinct bias towards effective team practice, as documented in the literature available on effective teams. (Campbell, 1993, Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993)

The third formal survey (Appendix D) was designed to replicate divisional 'ideals' for the teams, as identified in the 1993 Team Charter Meeting Agenda (Appendix A). Whereas the second questionnaire measured team member responses to statements about effective team practice *as documented in the survey of literature*, this third questionnaire measured team member responses to statements about

effective team practice *as determined by representatives of Christ the Redeemer School Division.*

Procedures for Data Collection: Team Building Opportunities

As principal, the researcher necessarily has a degree of bias and direct involvement in the study. As principal of the school, it is, in part, the mandate of the position to develop the teams and attempt to maximize their effectiveness. As principal - the principal teacher and educational leader of the school - an important role is to ensure the success and quality of the educational programs. Inherent in this job description is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment. Throughout the year a number of opportunities arose for me - in conjunction with staff - to provide team-building opportunities. Formally, there were two such opportunities during the 1996-97 school year:

1. A First-Year Teacher Orientation (see appendix D) was held on August 23, 1996, facilitated by the principal and two teachers in the role of team leaders. This orientation was designed not only for teachers embarking on the first year of their professional career, but also for any other teachers who were new to the district - regardless of previous teaching experience. Amidst the 'administrivia' regarding such necessary information as where to get supplies and how to use the photocopier, there was an opportunity to share the team initiative philosophy with the new educators. This was particularly evident in discussions about the school Vision and Mission statement (see appendix E), and the impact that working in teams can have

on achieving these goals by offering teams a means to communicate regularly and to plan together. In recent years, the implementation of this orientation day has been left to the Principal and two team leaders, and central office staff has little direct interaction. However, the Team Charter document developed in the district in 1993 continues to be the basis for all team function and development.

2. The first school-based professional development day of the school year took place on November 22. A committee of five staff members - including this researcher - was formed to determine, with staff input, the direction that professional development might take. One member of the committee polled the staff and determined that there was a significant response amongst staff indicating favour for pursuing formal team building. The interest seemed to center around two aspects of team building:

- 1) How to set team goals and implement them, and

- 2) Taking a significant portion of time to actually set team goals and implement them.

Neither of these desires was unforeseen. In the first instance, despite the orientation for first year staff in August, there was still some trepidation over all the aspects of developing and implementing the teams, even as the teams were meeting weekly to do so. More formal instruction was requested to suggest methodologies, rules, and norms. In the case of the second request, teachers were expressing a desire to set aside a significant block of uninterrupted time to perform the responsibilities of the team.

After I consulted with the Superintendent, he offered his approval, and indicated that he would provide additional monetary support. To this end, he procured the services of DACA Consulting Group to facilitate the event. DACA - Donald A. Campbell and Associates Inc. - had provided services four years earlier when the team initiative was in its fledgling stage. Building Winning Teams, authored by Don Campbell, is the manual-workbook which is the basis for the entire team initiative within Christ the Redeemer School Division.

The agenda for the day is attached (see appendix F), and, as is indicated, a significant portion of the day was left open to the facilitator to direct the group and answer questions of the teams. The format presented allowed for the facilitator to direct the entire staff through the team building exercises in the manual-workbook. Copyright laws prohibit the inclusion of specific exercises and activities that were engaged in, but the general format followed this format:

Successful Teams

definition of, team roles, research summary

Group Development

stages of group development

Team Planning

mission statement, goal setting, objectives, measurement, successful
planning model

The entire afternoon was utilized to meet in teams. Each team set up its own agenda, some based the agenda on the discussion of the morning, some used the time to continue ongoing team initiatives.

Procedures for Data Collection: Evaluative Measures

It is not inconsistent with the team initiative and the equality it represents to have an inherent hierarchical model operating within the school setting; that is the nature of administration and effective management. All team leaders meet with the administration of the school on a monthly basis to share information and update one another on recent and upcoming educational endeavours. This regular encounter, called Education Council, provides an opportunity for administration to monitor the teams' progress without direct interference, and yet allows for intervention or support in the event that it is necessitated.

Additionally, team leaders have a responsibility to ensure that team meeting agendas and minutes are readily available to the administration. These prove to be a valuable tool especially for the teams to monitor their own progress and to facilitate making decisions about their 'treatments' of students.

The data which was actually used to make inferences about the success of the teacher teams was obtained from the three teacher surveys. All teachers signed a waiver (see appendix G) in advance to indicate their compliance with the questionnaires. The participants identities were kept confidential, if not anonymous, at all times.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis was performed on the responses to the three staff questionnaires to determine the measures by which the success of the teams might be evaluated.

Teachers' impressions of the success of the teams were the qualitative tool on the first questionnaire which indicated the effectiveness of the teams, as their responses were interpreted by the researcher. Trends and commonalties were identified to suggest consensus, just as conflicting responses indicated ambiguity.

The second questionnaire lent itself to interpretation of a different nature. Since the statements had a distinct bias towards effective team practice (Campbell, 1993 , Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993) a high correlation indicated agreement with the given statements, and thereby indicated the presence of said practices. This can be interpreted as an indicator of successful team practice.

Again, the third questionnaire measured the effectiveness of the teams as compared to the general principles outlined by the Christ the Redeemer School division. A high correlation indicating agreement with the given statements would probably indicate successful team practice, but would definitely indicate successful implementation of the *divisional team concept*.

Summary

The methods and procedures of this study represent a full school year of treatments, but the process is ever ongoing. Three different questionnaires will indicate both qualitative and quantitative data to determine the effectiveness of the Team Initiative.

Chapter IV

Results

Results: Questionnaire #1

The following raw data was obtained from Team Member Questionnaire #1. Answers may be edited for redundancy or space, but the messages are consistent with those originally submitted. Of the eight surveys extended, all eight were submitted back to the researcher. For the purpose of analysis - especially to look for trends or commonalties - the grade 7 and 8 responses are designated separately by the grade level in brackets preceding the response. The number in brackets immediately following a response indicates that the statement was made by more than one respondent.

Question 1: Aspects of formal team development that were perceived as effective or not effective.

Response: Positive:

(7)- November PD day was an excellent chance to grow as team (3)

(7)- enjoyed the structure that was presented during each professional development activity

(7)- team leader is always on top of things (3)

(7)- administration is very helpful and accommodating (2)

(7)- team meetings are a great way to stay in ~~check~~

(7)- August orientation was very good (4)

(8)- orientation was invaluable for learning the ropes (2)

- (8)- Winning Team handbooks are very helpful
- (8)- first-year teacher orientation was very helpful (2)
- (8)- team leader is very good at what she does, very competent (3)
- (8)- structure is evident each time, obvious that work and preparation goes in
- (8)- right amount of information and work each time (3)

Negative:

- (7)- guest speaker at November PD day was terrible (2)
- (7)- a lot of 'education' on team building is redundant or common sense
- (8)- time could be better spent getting down to team issues
- (8)- too much theory, not enough practicality

Question 2. What are the strengths of the team?

Responses:

- (7)- organization of leader
- (7)- communication with other teachers, teams, and principal
- (7)- leader always prepared
- (7)- sharing of ideas
- (7)- sharing materials (3)
- (7)- discussing student issues and getting feedback (2)
- (8)- planning events
- (8)- strength and expertise of team leader (3)
- (8)- relying on individual strengths
- (8)- support for less experienced teachers

- (8)- always scheduled, always on time (2)
- (8)- learning about teaching and continuously improving (3)
- (8)- gives teachers and students a 'voice'
- (8)- ability to make own decisions (2)
- (8)- benefit from support of experienced teachers (mentally & resources) (2)
- (8)- one word: collaboration (3)

Question 3. What are the perceived shortcomings or weaknesses of the team?

Responses:

- (7)- some team members less cooperative (2)
- (7)- some times churning over the same information (2).
- (7)- meetings often disjointed and not prepared for by members
- (8)- teams' focus is not always there
- (8)- took a while to reach a good relationship (2)
- (8)- as a first year teacher, time constraints are a major concern

Question 4. Does the team have autonomy to make educational decisions?

Responses:

- (7)- yes, but some team members are more influential than others - this should be the case, since they are more experienced (2)
- (7)- yes, but it seems there are checks in place for administration to have influence
- (8)- only on little or non important issues
- (8)- feel restrained to making minor changes or 'fine-tuning'

(8)- yes, but money seems to be a huge factor (that is never in our favor) (3)

(8)- yes, and input comes from everyone - at least everyone has a chance

Question 5. Does the team receive support for educational endeavours from administration?

Responses:

(7)- both principal and vice show to meetings and contribute, but district admin. has no influence or support

(7)- principal is supportive but overworked (2)

(7)- support is there, but its often guarded - wary of having to spend money

(8)- both levels of admin. like to micro-manage at times

(8)- principal is very supportive

(8)- principal keeps the right distance, but is there when we need him

(8)- principal seems to want to help, and does, but is often held back financially

(8)- principal tries, but is far too busy

Question 6. How do you perceive your role as a team player?

Responses:

(7)- have my strengths, ex. Language Arts (4)

(7)- leader, but not officially (2)

(7)- active contributor (3)

(7)- probably too confrontational

(8)- contribute especially in my subject area (4)

(8)- as a new teacher I have insights that others may not

(8)- I'm a shit disturber, but in a good way

(8)- share my resources and ideas (3)

Question 7. Do you think the team is improving student performance?

Responses:

(7)- at this point we cannot compare to anything

(7)- it definitely has an impact on student learning, because we are better teachers for our efforts (2)

(8)- difficult to say

(8)- it would appear so, test results are better (2)

(8)- yes, but how much is because some are just good teachers?

Question 8. Comment on team meetings in general.

Responses:

(7)- very appropriate in length, timing, content (2)

(7)- team leader keeps everything smooth

(7)- inconvenient to meet every week - could be just as effective every second week

(8)- great for staying on top of things (2)

(8)- meetings are good and appropriate for length and frequency (3)

(8)- its what we do

(8)- prefer when department heads or administration come to share expertise

(2)

Results: Questionnaire #2

The results of Team Member Questionnaire #2 were analyzed to determine the arithmetic mean from the four respondents in each grade level. Again the 'perfect' score, indicating total agreement with the statement is 5.

Gr.7 Gr.8

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 3.3 | 3.8 | 1. The team members were taught team work skills and are required to use them. |
| 4.8 | 5.0 | 2. The team develops suggestions for how to implement change as required. |
| 3.5 | 4.5 | 3. Communication within the team is direct, open, and honest. |
| 4.0 | 4.3 | 4. All team members share a common sense of purpose and mission. |
| 4.3 | 4.8 | 5. Team members demonstrate a great deal of mutual trust, respect, and understanding. |
| 3.5 | 3.8 | 6. Team routinely measures or evaluates goal achievement or productivity. |
| 4.3 | 4.5 | 7. The leadership role is more facilitative, coaching oriented, and developmental than instructional or controlling. |
| 4.0 | 4.5 | 8. The team regularly reviews and reflects on its actions. |
| 4.3 | 4.5 | 9. The team encourages and enables individuals to develop. |
| 2.8 | 3.8 | 10. The team has sound links with other teams. |

Results: Questionnaire #3

The arithmetic mean of the responses was calculated for questionnaire number 3, again by grade level. As with questionnaire number 2, 5 is the highest score, indicating complete agreement with statements made in the division regarding effective team processes.

Gr.7 Gr.8

4.5	4.8	1. The team I am associated with offers a continuous process to improve student learning.
4.8	5.0	2. My team meets on a weekly basis.
4.5	4.8	3. At each team meeting the primary focus is studying student progress.
3.7	4.3	4. At each team meeting we discuss and devise 'mini experiments' to improve student learning.
4.8	5.0	5. Over the course of a three or four week period all significant areas of the curriculum get on the agenda.
5.0	5.0	6. Education starts with a study of the learner.
4.5	4.3	7. We focus on student achievement, not on teacher methodology. When achievement is weak, we change what the teacher does.
3.8	3.8	8. Learning is individual, we look at each student individually.
3.2	3.6	9. We have a plan in hand to deal with variance.
4.8	4.5	10. Leaders recognize problems and move the group towards solutions.
4.3	5.0	11. We record successful innovations and incorporate them into the way we do things.
4.0	3.5	12. This model portrays our method of operation: weakness \Rightarrow revised methodology \Rightarrow testing \Rightarrow strength \Rightarrow incorporate or: testing \Rightarrow weakness \Rightarrow try again

- 2.7 2.0 13. We develop our own Professional Development.
- 3.8 4.2 14. We coordinate with other grades and teams.

Summary

The results of the first survey are sometimes quite contrary, but more often express consistent points of view. The results of questionnaire #2 seems to indicate a trend, as do the responses in questionnaire #3. The results will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter V

Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn from Team Member Questionnaire #1 may certainly be burdened by the bias of the researcher. As much as possible, however, the researcher has tried to maintain objectivity in reporting the findings. In general, no unanimous responses were received, indicating that full consensus was never achieved for any answer, but there are certainly tendencies and patterns in some responses. Again, from the perspective of both researcher and principal, negative responses have as much value and merit as those which are quite 'positive' - and sometimes more. These responses, which indicate potential deficiencies in the workings of the team, also suggest immediate areas for treatment.

Very generally, it would appear that there is consensus that the teams are working and are doing some good. Interestingly, the question regarding the teams' effectiveness at improving student performance was responded to the most ambiguously. Team members did not seem to have a firm grasp on the teams' abilities to influence student test scores. In fact, this was an anticipated answer. As a relatively young school, with a very young staff, there is insufficient data at this time to recognize real trends. Additionally, none of the eight team members in the study were employed locally in the few years before the Team Initiative. Again there is little from which to draw comparisons.

Teachers on the whole seem most impressed with team leaders, the opportunity to share and receive support, and the structure that comes with being part

of a functioning team. There seems to be a small ground swelling of disgruntlement expressing dissatisfaction with redundancy and meeting for the sake of meeting. This was not a common theme, but it appeared often enough to be noteworthy.

Team members apparently did not perceive any support that might be offered from senior administration i.e. the superintendent or deputy superintendent. In fact, on many of the questionnaires central office staff were most conspicuous for having not been mentioned at all, and yet the influence from central office seems apparent to the researcher from an organizational hierarchy point of view.. Team members for the most part acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of local administration, but on more than one occasion make mention of money issues which seem prohibitive to operations that the team might like to pursue.

Albeit the teams are contrived - "it's what we do" - team members seem to find their own niche and fulfill a (necessary) role. Despite the fact that there is no choice to join or opt out of a team, the members seem content, if not enthusiastic.

Subjective responses can give, at best, perceptions of the success of the teams. It appears that the initiative is a guardedly successful one, based on teacher responses to the questionnaire.

The second survey appears to be more definitive in indicating success in the team setting. Each of the ten items listed in the questionnaire were taken from the literature (Campbell, 1993., Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993), as activities or norms that represented the practices of successful teams. Recalling that a score of 5 represents always, and 0 represents never, mean scores of 3 or higher would indicate

that the activity is perceived as taking place frequently, usually, or always. Of the eight items, only one scored below 3 at 2.8, indicating that the grade 7 team has sound links with other teams only 'occasionally'. Every other significant team practice occurs at least 'frequently', if not 'usually', according to the scale, for both of the teams. It would appear by this measure that the teams are perceived by the members to be successful. The Pygmalion Effect cannot be overlooked in this case, suggesting that if the teachers see themselves as successful it will translate into success.

The results of the third questionnaire again show general tendencies which indicate successful implementation of the divisional guidelines for teams. The grade seven and eight teams seem to be fairly consistent in their views, although the eights on the whole tend to score their team just a little bit higher. Again, almost every aspect was scored at 3.2 or higher by both teams. The solitary exception for both was the issue of self-developed professional development. The teams see this as especially problematic, indicating little autonomy in making professional development decisions.

Overall, scores of 3.2 or higher, corresponding to value statements "frequently", "is usually the case", and "always", indicate that the team members perceive themselves as fulfilling the mandate of the team.

Retrospective Account

As I look back over the past year and try to offer a personal retrospective account, I am somewhat torn. On one side, I have a desire to stay guardedly clinical when analyzing data in this case study, I suppose in some disillusioned sense that this might make the paper seem that much more credible. On the other, I acknowledge that it is impossible for me to remain unbiased and separate from the events of the year. Furthermore, my interpretation of the events is, in fact, integral to answering the project questions. In short, my opinion counts.

My own personal account of Team Building at Holy Trinity Academy this year is necessarily intertwined with everything else that transpired during the ten plus months of the school year. I was offered the position of Acting Principal for one year beginning July of 1996, and naturally I was determined to do the job to the very best of my ability. At the very least, this task was usually overwhelming; my inexperience, combined with that of a relatively young staff proved to be quite a challenge. With ten years teaching experience, including two as a vice-principal, I am a 'seasoned veteran' on a staff of 29 where 16 have taught for five years or less, and only seven of us have been in the profession for more than ten years. The situations that can arise on any staff were compounded by the fact that seven of the teachers were new to the district, and five were first year teachers. All of these variables appear to be in keeping with unwritten divisional philosophy which suggests that new teachers are not only less expensive, but they are more 'moldable' and can be influenced more readily to do things 'the way that we do them'.

All of these factors had a great influence not only on how I approached my position, but on the foci that I deemed necessary to promote throughout the year. My considerable influence as principal is evident especially in events such as our professional development day in November. Although staff consensus dictated that the day was spent building teams, there were other worthy topics that could have been addressed. My influence served to take the topic that seemed to have the interest of the majority and ensure that as it was presented it would have a positive impact on (hopefully) all staff members.

My perspective on Team Building throughout the 1996-97 school year draws on many sources of information. Apart from the formal evaluation of the problems, as determined from the three questionnaires, and the formal attempts at building the teams through the teacher orientation in August and the professional development day in November, I relied heavily on a number of other sources:

- Education Council meetings are held once each month within our school, consisting of the administration and each of the team leaders. These meetings provide an opportunity to update, but more importantly, to share team experiences, both positive and negative. Although as principal I was responsible for the agenda and minutes, I made a concerted effort not to 'run' the meetings, but rather to 'facilitate' the work of the professionals I work with. I believe that this spirit of collegiality and equality was appreciated.
- Team minutes from each of the teams were shared with the principal throughout the year, and at years' close are handed in for analysis, and to provide benchmarks

for future use. By their nature, team minutes should provide insight for teachers the following year indicating successful or unsuccessful processes for classes or even for individuals.

- Informal and formal meetings occurred throughout the year which provided a ‘window’ on the workings of the teams. On occasion I attended team meetings, but more often these views came from comments at staff meetings, chats in the staff room, or even one-on-one conversations. Generally, it seemed that if the teams were running smoothly, I had to witness it myself or probe the individuals to determine what events or procedures were especially successful. In the true sense of team, the members were slow to brag. On the other hand, team members seemed somewhat more open when dealing with problems or concerns within the teams. Having said that, it did appear that I was usually informed or consulted after the teams had come to an impasse, or even after a solution had been reached. I respected and appreciated this, because every indication is that the teams were acting autonomously as much as possible.
- Finally, I kept anecdotal notes and annotations in my day planner and in minutes of meetings regarding the year. More often than not, these notes dealt with teams within the school, because that is such a focus.

My perspective is that the grade seven and eight teams at Holy Trinity Academy are very successful, but not without difficulties. Aside from the questionnaires, I see the relationships that develop among staff members and the productive dependencies that develop. As the teams are designed, there is

considerable opportunity for individual growth autonomy, but there is also opportunity for collaboration.

Admittedly, I had the same reservation some of my colleagues have expressed about forced or contrived collegiality. However, I perceive the Team Initiative not so much as forcing people to collaborate, as providing an avenue to share and develop while maintaining individuality.

Granted, much of the (perceived) 'success' at Holy Trinity Academy could be attributed to a number of other sources. For the most part, the population is homogeneous, consisting mostly of upper middle class students whose parents are often professionals. Stereotypical problems that one might consider from an inner city school are less pronounced in this school. Drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancy and the like are certainly issues that we deal with, but to a much lesser degree than many schools. Additionally, despite the young age of the staff, Christ the Redeemer School Division has been in a rather enviable position these last few years: the division can often pick and choose from literally hundreds of candidates for generalist positions. This often ensures not only that excellent teachers are hired, but that conscious effort can be made to offer positions to individuals who will fit in to 'the way that we do things'.

None of the qualifications above deter from my perspective that the greatest success of the teams lies in the expertise and excellence of the teachers, coupled with a real plan for success. This plan must include concrete and clear expectations for team involvement. As both the school and the Team Initiative are relatively new,

there is no real data from which to draw comparisons, but the success, as measured by student achievement on standardized tests and teacher satisfaction suggests that the quality and impact of the teams is significantly positive. Interestingly, I would attribute a significant portion of the success to the vision of the Team Concept by the charter committee, and more recently to the efforts of the team leaders and the administration for setting the groundwork and continuously providing support and direction. This perception seems to be lost on many of the team members. Maybe it is a sign of successful implementation of the Team Concept that members perceive their own efforts as the sole impetus for continuously building and developing their team.

Response to the Research Questions

Research Question #1

The first research question reads: What are the processes that work and do not work in facilitating Team Building in Holy Trinity Academy?

In response, a number of processes that appear to have a positive influence on team development include:

- hiring independent, highly motivated individuals who will work well together;
- designate strong leaders with excellent people skills and strong organizational skills, who can constantly maintain focus;
- provide support and focus for developing teams, continuously, by administration;
- provide structured professional development opportunities, which team members contribute towards;
- individual ownership of the team must be established early, by having all members involved in decisions and mapping expectations for the team;
- ensuring opportunities and a climate for direct, open, and honest communication;
- empowering the team and the individuals to make decisions that directly affect its operation;
- regular meetings with specific agendas developed by the entire team;
- coordinate team activities with other teams; and,
- provide monetary support for team initiatives.

Of equal importance would be the following list of processes which appear to have a negative impact on team development:

- weak or ineffective team leaders;
- allowing meetings to get off topic. This includes straying from the agenda, rehashing issues, etc. See the first item above;
- spending too much time on the ‘theory’ of team building as opposed to spending time at ‘practical’ and applied team activities;
- not developing enough structure. That is, not providing opportunity and direction for the team to develop;
- not establishing concrete and firm rules for team meetings;
- team members who are not team players;
- administration not supportive;
- team has sense of working independently from other teams;
- a sense that the team is not empowered or cannot change educational issues, including not having input on professional development; and
- lack of monetary support.

Research Question #2

The second research question reads: What is the quality of the grade seven and eight teams and what are the impacts of the teams?

The response seems unanimous for all members of both the grade seven and the grade eight team: the quality of the (respective) team is high, as evidenced by their

responses to open-ended queries, and as measured by numerically graduated responses to statements about effective teams. The impact appears to be satisfied teachers who are indeed providing “a continuous process to improve student learning”.

A Final Note

The findings of this study, although not conclusive, suggest responses to the two part problem posed. In the first regard, it would appear that Holy Trinity Academy, a school in the Christ the Redeemer Separate School Division has a process by which teacher teams are formed and maintained. By providing direction, leadership at various levels, a concrete plan, and resources in the form of time and (limited) money, Holy Trinity Academy appears to benefit from the success of its teams. While it cannot automatically be assumed that the findings of this study would transfer to all school settings, it appears reasonable that many of the processes designed to promote teacher team development would be effective in other schools.

The measures of success by which the team can be measured are subjective, but appear to be valid. Teachers’ perceptions which indicate contentedness or enthusiasm about the team can attest to the teams success.

In the future, two studies at the minimum are immediately suggested. First, a long term study measuring the effects of teacher teams on actual student performance would be very telling. Secondly, a study of this nature, on a grander scale, might indicate the potential for ‘successful’ teams at other grade levels, or across grade

levels, as in the case of more traditional teams in the form of subject area departments.

Chapter VI

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Appendix A

Team Charter Committee Meeting

Wednesday, June 2, 1993 - Holy Trinity Academy

AGENDA

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review of Purpose of Committee
 - to deal with a number of issues relating to teams
3. Issues Respecting Teams
 - a) purpose of teams - focus is on student learning
 - b) leadership
 - c) agendas, frequency, and location of meetings
 - d) support services for teams
 - e) norms and rules
 - f) decision making power of teams
 - g) coordination of team activities
 - h) budget for teams
 - i) relationship to PD Committee
 - j) relationship to program of studies
 - k) relationship to school and district goals and priorities
4. Other business

Team Member Questionnaire #1

Dear Colleague,

As you may know, I am in the midst (actually, near the end) of pursuing my Masters degree from the University of Lethbridge. The title of my final paper is tentatively planned to be *Building and Evaluating Teacher Teams*. I am curious to hear your responses to some of my queries about your experience at Holy Trinity Academy during the 1996-1997 school year.

Specifically, I'd like to formulate a position indicating the effectiveness of the team concept as it has been maintained or developed during this school year. I'm curious about all aspects, from the autonomy of the team, to the interaction between teams, to administrative influence on their form and function.

You most certainly can respond anonymously, but I encourage you to add your name to your questionnaire, as I envision that the results of this survey may have a positive impact on operations within the school, especially in terms of the manner by which we manage our teams. The main reason I have chosen this topic for my paper is that I perceive it to be concrete and applicable to our situation. I value your individual perspective, and hope that it might provide insight into that which we do well at HTA, and that which we might improve.

You are in no way obligated to respond to the questions contained herein. Your answers will have no bearing on your position within the school, in fact, criticisms will be accepted as constructive feedback for the potential betterment of everybody's situation. I am under no obligation whatsoever to share results in whole or in part of this survey to any employees, board members, or otherwise shareholders of Christ the Redeemer School Division. Any inclusion of your answers in any draft of this paper - in whole or in part - will be treated with complete anonymity.

Please answer the following questions in any manner you deem appropriate, i.e. short answer, paragraph etc.

Your Name: _____ Grade _____
(You need not give your name)

Part 1

The Development of Teams

Please comment on the aspects of formal team development that you thought were particularly effective and contrast them with those you thought were less effective. By 'formal' team development, I refer specifically to first-year teacher orientations, Professional Development days, and team meetings which had a focus on team development.

Part 2

Strengths of the Teams

What do you regard as the particular strengths of your team, and what do you consider advantageous when working as a team?

Part 3

Shortcomings or Weaknesses of the Teams

As Part 2 above, but please comment on those aspects whereby you think working as a team has hindered efficiency or effectiveness, or where you think the team may come up short of its goals.

Part 4

Autonomy of the Teams

Do you perceive your team as having autonomy to make educational decisions? Please give a specific example if possible.

Part 5

Administrative Support of the Teams

Have you experienced support for your team endeavours from the following levels of administration?

Local

Central Office

Part 6

Roles Within the Teams

How do you perceive your role as a team player?

Part 7

Effectiveness of the Teams

Specifically, the mandate of the teams is to “improve student performance in the core courses, especially (but not limited to) as measurable on standardized tests such as the CTBS. Do you think the team is instrumental in achieving this end?

Part 8

Team Meetings

Times, frequency, length, etc.

Please comment on any positive or negative aspects of the team meetings.

Part 9

Other?

Team Questionnaire #2

The following survey is designed to identify traits or practices that are exhibited by the teams at Holy Trinity Academy. Please take your time and give honest thought to the statements below. To indicate your response, write the number from 0 to 5 which most closely agrees with your opinion. For example, a 5 would reflect strong agreement with the statement, while a 0 would indicate strong disagreement. Please do not write your name on this survey.

Survey Statement Rating Scale:

Grade _____

- 5 - always
- 4 - is usually the case
- 3 - frequently
- 2 - occasionally
- 1 - rarely
- 0 - never

- _____ 1. The team members were taught team work skills and are required to use them.
- _____ 2. The team develops suggestions for how to implement change as required.
- _____ 3. Communication within the team is direct, open, and honest.
- _____ 4. All team members share a common sense of purpose and mission.
- _____ 5. Team members demonstrate a great deal of mutual trust, respect, and understanding.
- _____ 6. Team routinely measures or evaluates goal achievement or productivity.
- _____ 7. The leadership role is more facilitative, coaching oriented, and developmental than instructional or controlling.
- _____ 8. The team regularly reviews and reflects on its actions.
- _____ 9. The team encourages and enables individuals to develop.
- _____ 10. The team has sound links with other teams.

Team Questionnaire #3

Dear Grade 7 and 8 Team Members,

I hope it is not a terrible imposition that I am asking you one last time to give me some perspective on the way your team has operated throughout the past year. As before, you need not include your name, but I will ask you to write down your grade level. This will allow me to identify trends and commonalties within each of the two teams.

This third questionnaire is designed to reflect the original vision of the team, as determined at a Team Charter meeting some four years ago.

The rating scale is the same as that used on the last survey, it is a six-point scale ranging from 0 to 5, where 5 indicates strong agreement with the statement, and 0 indicates strong disagreement. More specifically,

Survey Statement Rating Scale:

- 5 - always
- 4 - is usually the case
- 3 - frequently
- 2 - occasionally
- 1 - rarely
- 0 - never

Grade _____

- _____ 1. The team I am associated with offers a continuous process to improve student learning.
- _____ 2. My team meets on a weekly basis.
- _____ 3. At each team meeting the primary focus is studying student progress.
- _____ 4. At each team meeting we discuss and devise 'mini experiments' to improve student learning.
- _____ 5. Over the course of a three or four week period all significant areas of the curriculum get on the agenda.

The following are general principles which may or may not describe your particular team. Again, rank from 0 to 5 to show your agreement or disagreement **that this is the case on your team.**

- _____ 6. Education starts with a study of the learner.
- _____ 7. We focus on student achievement, not on teacher methodology. When achievement is weak, we change what the teacher does.
- _____ 8. Learning is individual, we look at each student individually.

- _____ 9. We have a plan in hand to deal with variance.
- _____ 10. Leaders recognize problems and move the group towards solutions.
- _____ 11. We record successful innovations and incorporate them into the way we do things.
- _____ 12. This model portrays our method of operation:
 weakness \Rightarrow revised methodology \Rightarrow testing \Rightarrow strength \Rightarrow incorporate
 or: testing \Rightarrow weakness \Rightarrow try again
- _____ 13. We develop our own Professional Development.
- _____ 14. We coordinate with other grades and teams.

Orientation Day

Friday, August 23rd, 1996

Holy Trinity Academy

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

	Topic	Presenter
9:00	Opening Liturgy	
9:30	The Catholic Teacher	Mr. Ron Wallace Superintendent
9:45-10:45	The Team Approach in Divisional Schools Practice and Assessment in Curriculum Areas	Teacher / Administrator Team
10:45-11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00-12:15	Classroom Management and the First Day	Teacher / Administrative Team
12:15-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-1:30	Teacher Growth and Development	Dr. Bertha Wilson Deputy Superintendent
1:30-2:30	Personnel Matters	Dennis Schneider Board Treasurer Theresa O'Brien Board Secretary
3:00-4:00	Wine and Cheese - An opportunity to meet and mingle with Division Administrators, Team Leaders, Division Personnel, and fellow teachers	

Holy Trinity Academy

Veritas: Christo et Ecclesiae
“Truth for Jesus and His People”

Mission

Holy Trinity Academy Students Will Learn in a Caring Environment in Which They Can Gain the Knowledge, Skills, and Catholic Values That Will:

- *challenge them to obtain exemplary academic standing;*
- *foster a sense of good judgment and accountability leading to proper self-control, self-direction, self-discipline, leadership, and discipleship;*
- *develop the whole individual who respects the uniqueness of others and the dignity and worth of all creation;*
- *encourage them to strive for personal excellence, applying their gifts and talents to successfully meet the challenges of life with hope and confidence; and*
- *create an atmosphere which instills school pride, school spirit, and enduring Catholic school traditions.*

Appendix G

Holy Trinity Academy Professional Development Day Friday, November 22nd, 1996

- 8:00 - 8:45 Coffee and building community
- in Common Room
- 8:45 - 9:00 Liturgy of the Word
- 9:00 - 9:15 Opening Address and Welcome
- Ron Wallace
- 9:15 - 9:20 Introduction of Don Campbell
- Michael Kilcommons
- 9:20 - 12:00 Building Teams in an Educational Setting
- Don Campbell
- As this is Don's area of expertise, the specific agenda and timelines will be determined by him. Towards 10:30 there will be a 15 minute break. Some of the topics (questions) we have asked Don to address include:
- *Why teams? - What are the advantages and benefits we might expect to realize from working effectively in teams? - What are the short-term and long-term pay-offs? - What are the characteristics and traits of an effective team? - What are the norms and rules of effective team work? - What are the roles of individuals within the team? - How do we set team goals, and how do we implement them?*
- Don made it very clear that he is only the facilitator of the day, and that he will try to help us to develop our own agenda. There will be opportunities for feedback and discussion, and possibly breakouts into small groups if that's what we desire.
- 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch
- basketball in the gymnasium
- 1:00 - 2:30 Team Work
- in established, as well as informal teams.
- suggested teams:
Grade 7 Grade 8 English Math Science
Social Studies CTS Fine Arts and Religion
- This second part of the day should be very practical. Don will move about to facilitate and provide support, but this is time for us to put our new-found knowledge to practical use.
- 2:30 - 2:45 Break
- 2:45 - 3:30 Cross team meetings and contacts
- all Phys. Ed. teachers must meet with Mr. Kehler, all Religion teachers with Sister Patricia. If possible these two meetings will happen simultaneously at 2:45. There may be conflict with some teachers, they should make arrangements to meet with Stewart or Patricia later.
- efforts should be made on the part of all teachers to tie in with other teachers who instruct in the same discipline(s). i.e. all Math teachers etc.
- 3:30 - 4:00 Regroup
- meet again to discuss the day. What questions do we still have?

Consent for Research Participation

This document confirms the consent of _____ to participate in the research project entitled: Building and Evaluating Teacher Teams in Schools. The researcher is Michael Kilcommons, a student in the Masters Program in Education at the University of Lethbridge.

Purpose of Research:

To describe and analyze the efforts of a school to develop and maintain teacher teams. Efforts will be made to determine the effectiveness of the teacher teams.

As a potential participant, I have been informed, to an appropriate level of understanding, of the purpose and methodology of this research project, and the nature of my involvement.

I agree to participate in this project by doing the following:

- _____ Participate in one or more interviews.
- _____ Fill out a questionnaire.
- _____ Allow any comments made by me in formal and / or informal settings to become part of the research data, (without use of names).
- _____ Share journal entries that I make regarding the functions of the school and teacher teams.

I understand and agree that:

My participation is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw from this research at any time without penalty. The researcher has a corresponding right to terminate my participation in this research at any time. Participation or non-participation will have no effect on my position within the school jurisdiction.

All data will be kept in a secure space, and will be inaccessible to others. Confidentiality will be assured by the use of aliases throughout, and any information given in confidence or subsequently asked to be "taken off the record" will be deleted. All raw data, including interview transcripts and the index which provides the only record linking aliases to real names will be destroyed upon the completion of data analysis. I will be able to read or obtain the research reports or other "write-up" in the following manner: 1) I can read a transcript of my interview and ask to have statements deleted or kept "off the record", and 2) aggregate results will be available to staff through department or committee meetings, using the above measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity as appropriate.

I have read this consent form and I understand the nature of my involvement in this project. I agree to participate within the above stated parameters.

Name: _____ **Signature** _____

Date: _____ **Researcher:** _____

Please sign this copy and return it to the researcher. A duplicate copy will be returned to you for your records.