A CASE STUDY OF
THE USE OF PORTFOLIOS TO
APPRAISE TEACHER PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of professional portfolios in appraising teacher performance. The scope goes from the broad perspective of determining the sources of discontentment in present evaluation practices; to the narrow focus on the experiences of teachers using portfolios in evaluation, and back to the broad view of portfolios within the context of the roles of teacher evaluation in the education system. The format looks like Figure 1.

Figure 1: An Overview of the Project

A Broad look at the Evaluation of
Teacher Performance

A Narrow look at
Portfolio Assessment

Putting Portfolios into the Broader View
of Appraising Teacher Performance
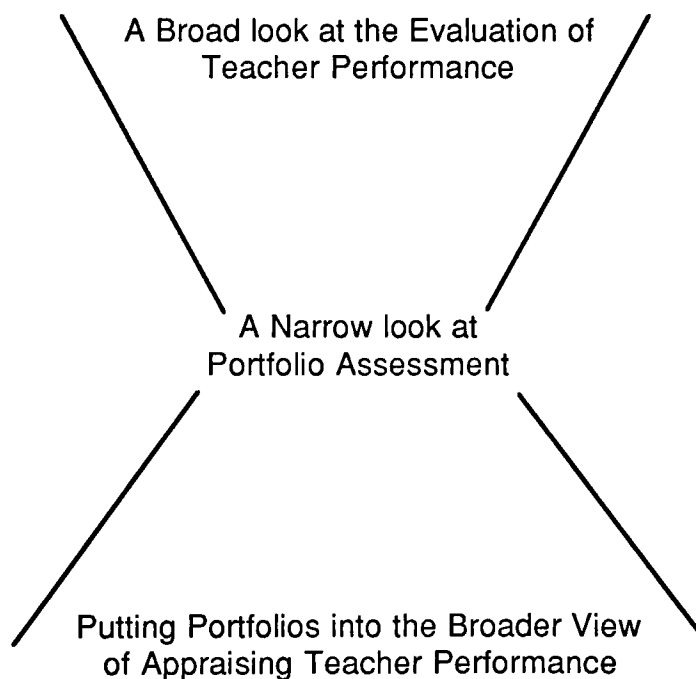
Part I

This project begins by providing the reader with a theoretical base to set the context for the study. A need is established for a new procedure in assessing teacher performance by retracing how I came to be interested in the topic. Then I investigate the discontentment of teachers with the process by identifying the dual nature of the role of teacher evaluation - accountability and professional development. The relationship between these two components is described by using the word 'conflict' as that was how they appear to exist in the minds of many teachers. The conflict is presented in the same manner as it unfolded to me.

I propose that a compromise can be reached between accountability and professional development by stating the first can actually lead to the second. Last, I suggest professional portfolios can bridge both roles of teacher evaluation.

Part II

The case study is initiated with the intent to provide evidence that portfolios provide teachers with a chance to demonstrate their competence, thus satisfying the need for accountability while promoting their growth as professionals. For my research, I chose a small town in rural Alberta where teachers had been experimenting with the use of portfolios as part of the evaluation process since 1992.

After outlining the intent of the project from the principal's perspective I relate the perceptions of the direct participants and the superintendent. I discover that despite a different format, the same concerns about teacher evaluation surfaced. I summarize these concerns through four recurring themes that emerged from the study. They are the themes of the *cutting edge*, *second-guessing*, *tunnel vision* and *isolation*.

The problems addressed in the themes are dealt with in the interpretation of the

data. I identify six <u>needs</u> that must be considered before portfolio assessment can successfully be implemented as a form of teacher evaluation. I then relate my findings in the research literature on teacher evaluation and professional development.

Part III

In the final chapter of the project, I return again to the discussion of professional development and accountability. I investigate why portfolios did not bridge the two elements despite the hopes of the principal. To explain the tension, I probe into the two views of teaching within the education community.

I conclude with a plan to place the appraisal of teaching performance within the context of goal setting and school improvement plans, thus creating the concept of a professional development school or school system where accountability and professional development can not only coexist but can be coterminous. I present a diagram that depicts how portfolios can be facilitated in such a structure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE CONTEXT - A THEORETICAL BASE TO THE STUDY

The Origins of the Study

In using portfolios with children, I was amazed at not only how they began to take ownership of their own learning but the sophisticated manner in which they began to articulate *how* they learned. This discovery came at an interesting time in my career when I moved from working less directly with children to working more directly with teachers.

As a program specialist, one of my main duties was to help teachers with the inclusion of students with special needs into the regular classroom instruction. I spent a great deal of time in classrooms working and talking with teachers about their instructional practices. Just as I had been amazed at how articulate my students were becoming in describing their learning processes, I became equally amazed at how many teachers could not explain to me why they were having their students do the activities outlined in their lesson plans. Sometimes, the teachers would explain to me that a particular worksheet, activity or game was fun or motivational but could not explain how it fit in with the overall objectives of the subject area. Or, they would tell me the topics or themes they were planning to cover but had more trouble describing the academic concepts and skills that they intended to teach students within these units.

I was also surprised at how eager they were to talk about their teaching and how appreciative they were of any positive feedback given to them. One teacher especially thanked me for my supportive comments and concluded with the statement

that teachers never hear about what they are doing right, only about what they are doing wrong.

It was in this consultant role that I got to really see the effects of the tension that is created in teachers by the initiation of new curriculum or instructional techniques. It is difficult to introduce new ideas or practices without discrediting the positive aspects of current practices. (Collins, 1991)   Good teachers continually struggle in trying to balance the old and the new both within their educational practices and within their educational philosophies. Tension is further intensified for teachers by the assessment practices of their performance. It is here that teachers are *judged* on both their compliance to standards as well as being measured on their innovative and creative abilities. (Stiggins & Duke, 1990)

Through dialogues with teachers about their teaching, I became increasingly aware of two issues concerning evaluation of their instruction. First, there was a general discontent with present forms of teacher evaluation practices. Second, a venue was needed for teachers to reflect on their practices and take ownership over the assessment of these practices. The following two evaluation stories are but two of many I heard that exemplify the need to rethink teacher evaluation practices.

Two Teacher Stories

Betty - A Seasoned Teacher's Story

Betty had a very challenging group of grade five students. Several of them were identified as having significant special needs and were functioning at an academic level four to five years behind their classmates. Betty asked for my assistance in collecting materials that pertained to her themes but were at an easier

reading level. Apart from some help in that area, Betty required no other assistance in including these youngsters in her regular program. She was very adept at modifying her instructional techniques to accommodate a wide range of student abilities. Betty was a master teacher, having taught for over twenty years. As well, she was a life-long learner. She had received her Master's Degree a few years earlier and by regularly attending various inservices, workshops and conferences she kept abreast of the latest educational innovations and research. She was considered the school's computer expert and had been the coordinator of several inservices for other teachers on her staff.

While in her class one day, I shared my admiration for one of Betty's excellent instructional strategies. She responded by sharing her frustration and anger about the evaluation process that she had just undergone. She was in the process of writing a letter of complaint to her principal about the evaluation review.

According to district policy, it was Betty's turn to be evaluated. The administrator in charge of the process was the vice principal. This administrator was new, only in the second year of the job and still learning about the procedures of teacher evaluation. Although still relatively young, many of the administrator's own teaching practices could be identified as being more traditional than Betty's. This vice principal had not attended some of the workshops on the new strategies that Betty was trying to implement in her classroom. As a result, according to her standards, Betty felt she received a rather poor evaluation. In particular, she felt some suggestions for improvement included in the report showed the administrator's lack of understanding of what she was trying to accomplish in her program. She considered the suggestions to be inappropriate for her and did not want them to be placed into her file at the district office. Consequently, Betty was furious and voiced her complaints to both her

principal and me. Her comment about the whole affair was that she deserved better treatment than to be judged by someone who was, in her words, "still wet behind the ears".

Jan - A Beginning Teacher's Story

Jan had only a fraction of Betty's teaching experience but her story was equally disturbing. Jan had received the highest of accolades during her student teaching practicums. Now she was in her second year of teaching; her first in her present school. District policy required that Jan be evaluated to receive permanent certification.

Jan was informed by her principal that the vice-principal would be conducting the evaluation. Because she was new into teaching, she assumed that the process would be much like her practicum at university where the professor came in, observed, took notes, and discussed with her the strengths of her lesson as well as pointing out areas that could use improvement. Since she was just starting up a new program in this school, she was looking forward to receiving some suggestions.

However, what actually occurred was quite different from Jan's expectations. Her vice principal never did come in for a set observation time. Occasionally this administrator would walk into Jan's room while she was teaching to hand her some information on regular school business. The vice principal would glance around the class and then leave. The visit never lasted for more than a few minutes at a time.

In fact, Jan had forgotten that she was to be evaluated until the vice principal called her into the office in late May and handed her a neatly typed document. She was surprised to discover that it was her summative evaluation report.

It was glowing. But when she took it back to her room she wondered when the

vice principal had been in to see the things that had been commented on. In checking the dates of the reported visits listed at the top of the evaluation with her plan book she realized that some of the remarks didn't even coincide with the activities for that day.

Despite the positive evaluation of her teaching and the recommendation for permanent status within the school district, Jan felt disappointed. It wasn't until the following year, though, that she felt even more frustrated by the whole evaluation process. Another new teacher, a friend of Jan's, came on staff during the following school term. In June, this friend shared her evaluation report with Jan. It was word for word identical to the one Jan had received the year before. In fact, there was one whole section where the secretary had forgotten to replace Jan's name with that of the new teacher!

THE ROLE OF TEACHER EVALUATION -
FROM CONFLICT TO COMPROMISE

A Conflict ... is Discovered

Much of the discontent the two teachers felt with the evaluation of their performance arose out of a tension that is similar to that described by Collins (1991) regarding curriculum innovations versus present instructional practices. In these particular cases, however, the tension is created between the conflicting purposes inherent in evaluation practices; the elements of <u>accountability</u> and <u>professional development</u>.

Betty was angry at being made accountable to an external judge whom she did not respect as being as knowledged as she. She felt her professional development had not been given enough consideration. Jan was looking forward to the process to

help her grow as a professional but the "laissez-faire" approach did not give her the feedback she felt she needed to improve. From their experiences, both Betty and Jan saw evaluation as a political "hoop" to jump through to be able to continue with their teaching.

Since I did not have a negative view of evaluation, I wanted to learn more about the apparent conflict that exists between accountability and professional development. It was my intent that if I could discover why this perception of conflict existed in the minds of teachers, then I could justify the use of portfolios as a means of alleviating this tension. From what I had experienced with students, I was convinced that portfolios could be the linking element.

I begin my study with an investigation into the roles of teacher evaluation.

The Conflict ... From a Narrow Perspective

Initially, I learned of the dichotomy between accountability and professional development in a master's level education course, Teaching and Teacher Development, taught by Dr. David Townsend at the University of Lethbridge. I came to understand that an oft-cited component of teacher evaluation policies is professional development. Prior to this class, it had never occurred to me that evaluation practices were to be *considered* a form of professional development and, from the mini study I conducted, I realized I was not the only member of the class who felt this way.

I surveyed thirteen classmates. They had been teaching on an average of fifteen years. They each had been formally evaluated four times throughout the span of their careers.

When asked to define the word, "evaluation", my classmates responded with the descriptors - judging, data-collecting, interpreting information, feedback on strategy

and technique, suggestions for improvement, confirm or determine if requirements of policy are met, to find out if they [standards or goals] have been met, and compare performance to a standard or bench mark. All of them described the formal evaluation process in the same way. Observations were done either by the superintendent or principal. Conferencing sessions (usually in some combination of pre and post) were held. Then a summative report was given *to* the teacher. No one described a process in which the teacher was the initiator of any part of the process. Rather, the opposite was depicted. Even in the conferencing sessions, the teacher was the recipient of information.

Given this process of an external procedure done 'to' them, it is little wonder when the class answered with a resounding, unanimous "NO" to the question, **"Did the evaluation process help you to grow professionally?"** Even these highly motivated teachers and administrators did not regard teacher evaluation practices to be a catalyst to professional development.

In fact, teacher development was viewed in a much more positive light than evaluation in every section of the questionnaire. My classmates described the development process in such glowing terms as - evolving, unfolding, developing myself, reflecting, identifying areas for personal growth and change, to expand and extend knowledge for personal development, learning, becoming a teacher, questioning and growing, becoming more aware, is an understanding that we are not static, knowing what "better" is, growing and changing, increasing our knowledge of why, exploring, searching for new innovative ideas and growing in skills, judgment, sensitivity to students' needs and our own needs.

When asked to describe a teacher development activity or process which dramatically changed the way in which they taught, 54% of my classmates answered

with the word *collaboration.* This collaboration came in such forms such as committee work, team teaching and graduate course work.

With collaboration playing such a key role in the development process, the answer to the question, "Who has been the most influential person in the course of your professional development?" came as no surprise. 78% of my classmates chose colleagues as a first choice; next came the students. Even the administrators in the class chose a teaching colleague as their most influential "other". (I wondered if they felt that they were an influential other, in a positive sense, to those that they evaluated.)

The type of activities they listed as facilitating teacher development were workshops, seminars, reading professional journals, university classes, individual projects, team planning, conventions, reflecting, parent input, talking and sharing, council and committee work, modelling lessons to other teachers and visiting and observing other teachers. No one in my class identified evaluation as being a form of teacher development.

When I presented this information back to the class, I commented that I thought it interesting that teachers would feel that going in to observe others was a professional development activity, yet did not consider having an evaluator observe them as a component of teacher development. One teacher responded that it all had to do with the motive behind the action.

In contrast to the view of professional development as a collegial, internal process of transformation these teachers viewed evaluation as a competitive external judgment.

The Conflict ... From a Broader Base

I continued the investigation into accountability versus professional

development from a broader context. My school district had just completed a staff performance evaluation survey. The deputy superintendent kindly granted me an interview and access to the survey results. He told me that the reason for the survey was because staff groups were dissatisfied with performance evaluation. He hoped that the results of the questionnaire would help the committee studying the issues to come up with a better process of evaluation to produce a higher level of satisfaction. When I asked him to explain the purpose of teacher evaluation from a district perspective he answered it was necessary to provide teachers with feedback on their performance, identifying areas needing improvement, as part of the teacher development process.

Since the deputy superintendent identified teacher development as being a major component of evaluation, I delved into the district policy to see if it was actually worded as such. I did not have to search very far. The primary focus for the evaluation process for the district was clearly stated in the preamble.

> The Board of Trustees believes that supervision and evaluation of instruction, conducted in a positive manner, will lead to professional growth in all members of its educational staff. Further, the Board believes that by emphasizing and encouraging professional growth and constantly striving to improve the quality of class-room instruction the best possible educational experience will be provided for each student in Lethbridge School District No. 51.

The authors of this policy define accountability by evaluation as being a component of the professional development cycle. Teachers become accountable to the end product, improved student learning, through engaging in professional development activities. The process could be depicted as in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The Role of Evaluation As Defined By Policy
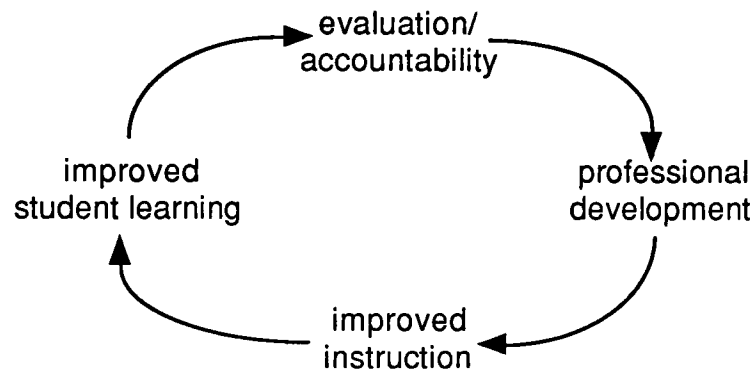
Yet, the deputy superintendent acknowledged that teachers were unhappy with the present procedures, which precipitated the reason for the survey. One respondent to the survey stated his/her dissatisfaction with the comment, "I have no problem with being evaluated. It's the process I'm not happy with."

When the intent of the policy is to facilitate professional development why is there such a discrepancy between process and practice?

The following comments and suggestions by teachers from the district survey confirm that while teachers would also consider improved student learning to be the end product of professional development, they would not always define accountability by evaluation to be a means to that end:

- I have not yet seen how many of these evaluations have helped a good teacher to become better or a poor teacher improve.

- The evaluation process, as it stands, is quite meaningless. What is needed is ongoing evaluation, followed by growth in

areas where it is needed. More of this would improve
teaching. An evaluation report, by itself, does not.

• To help us grow as teachers, it is necessary to get frequent
feedback. Our students would not grow if they received an
evaluation once every four years. I understand there must
be limits to evaluation frequency, but the greater frequency
would benefit my goal of quality instruction.

• [It is] crucial that evaluators be trained to do formal evaluations
so that the experience is one of growth rather than criticism.

• Process is too regimented. It does not address people
who have become stagnant, frustrated, [and are]
encountering difficulties.

Accountability by evaluation is viewed by most teachers as being an external

element to the process of professional development, as depicted by Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: The Role of Evaluation as Interpreted by Teachers
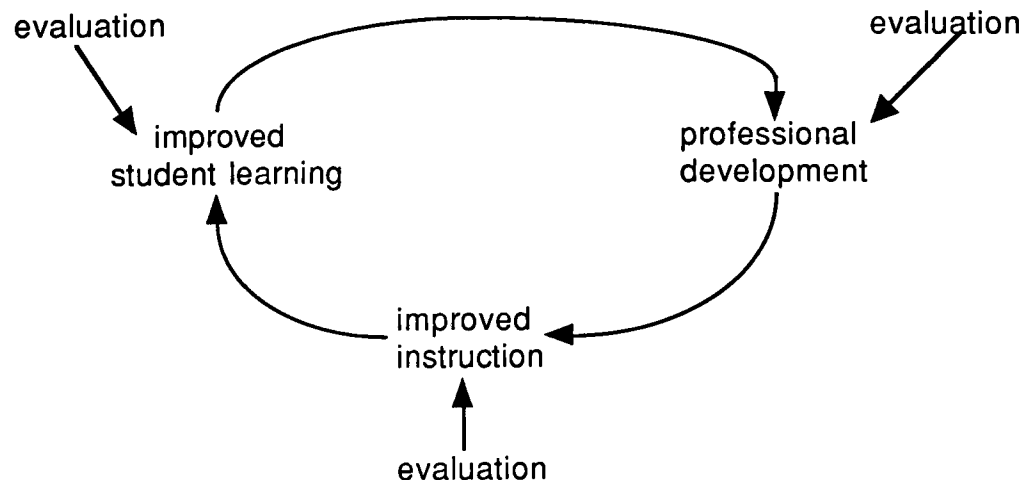
Finally, here is a quote from one teacher that sums up the frustrations many

teachers are feeling with present evaluation practices:

> "It is hard to argue with a system that attempts to make
> improvements. But what happens in theory in contrast
> to what ultimately "happens"? [The evaluation process]
> becomes more of a political tokenism."

The Conflict ... From a Provincial Perspective

Not only are studies being conducted at a local level but on a provincial one as

well. Alberta Education, in cooperation with the Council on Alberta Teaching

Standards, published a study in June 1993 entitled, Toward Teacher Growth: A Study

of the Impact of Alberta's Teacher Evaluation Policy.

The focus of this study was to determine the impact of evaluation policies on

teachers and teaching throughout Alberta.

> In 1984 the province of Alberta approved a teacher
> evaluation policy that stated that the performance of
> individual teachers and the quality of teaching
> practices across the province would be evaluated
> to assist in the provision of effective instruction to
> students and in the professional growth and development
> of teachers. (pg. 1)

During the 1991-92 school year groups of researchers studied a cross section

of districts to ascertain if evaluation policies were contributing to the professional

growth of teachers and to determine trends and concerns with such policies. They

discovered that:

> Although the most frequently declared purpose for the

policy was Improvement of instruction (88.5%), the
remaining frequently declared purposes (5 of 6) dealt
mostly with legal aspects, and only one was relevant to
instruction: professional development component.
Thus the interpretation of Improvement of instruction
appears to be one of detecting and dealing with
incompetent teachers." (pg. 33)

A major cause of friction between accountability and professional development,

arises in the interpretation of the word "development". Many administrators/evaluators

may define professional development to mean improved classroom instruction, but

they monitor for the purpose of finding teachers whose classroom practices do not

measure up against predetermined criteria and standards. The Teacher Evaluation

Policy Impact Study findings confirmed that, in the main:

Teacher evaluations are strongly based on teacher
performance, planning, and preparation and involve
classroom observation and reviewing lesson plans.
(Alberta Education, 1993, pg. 60)

Teachers, on the other hand, would consider such practices as the evaluation of

"minimum competence" and not an activity that promotes professional growth. (Duke &

Stiggins, 1990, pg. 117). Experienced teachers who participated in the provincial

study expressed similar sentiment to Betty's about the use of evaluation to measure

minimum competence at advanced stages of their careers.

Some experienced teachers spoke out strongly
against the use of criteria which assessed the
basic teaching skills of veteran teachers. They
felt insulted that anyone would consider that
they did not have these skills after ten or more
years of successful teaching, and they often saw
the evaluation process as a waste of time for

administrators and teacher because it denied
their growth as professionals. (pg. 292)

Evaluation for minimum competence does not promote professional development. To

the teacher evaluation, then, becomes an "artificial process" despite the intent of

provincial or district policies and this artificiality causes it to be devalued by both

administrator and teacher.

Teachers and administrators had mixed views about
the impact of teacher evaluations on the quality of
instruction. Some administrators who had taken the
task of teacher evaluation seriously, concluded that
the benefits did not seem to be worth the effort.
Teachers, even those supportive of the process, reported
that evaluation, while providing a "pat on the back" did
not bring lasting changes to their teaching. (pg. 294)

The Conflict... As Described in the Literature

At present, accountability and professional development do not coexist

comfortably within the same teacher evaluation system. (Wise, Darling-Hammond, et

al, 1984). Part of the difficulty with putting the two components together is a result of

how each is defined, or rather interpreted by administration and teacher.

In their article, <u>Beyond Minimum Competence Evaluation for Professional</u>

<u>Development</u>, Duke and Stiggins (1990) differentiate between the terms accountability

and professional development. Accountability is the "minimal acceptance levels of

competence and prescribed areas or performance standards" whereas professional

development is defined as:

the process or processes by which minimally competent
teachers achieve higher levels of professional competence

and expand their understanding of self, role, context, and
career. (pg. 117)

Professional development is different from accountability between professional

adequacy and professional excellence. Duke & Stiggins (1990) outlined the areas of

growth that lead toward professional excellence. They are a combination of:

- instructional development (organizational development
  particularly pertaining to classroom instruction)

- professional development (pertaining to career
  development)

- personal development (pertaining to life planning and
  interpersonal skills)

There is the potential for the measures of minimal competence to become an

integral part of professional excellence. Thus, accountability would be subsumed into

the act of professional development. This would be the ideal given that the end

product of both accountability and professional development is increased student

learning. Why, then, is there such a discrepancy between the purpose (reasons) for

evaluation and the effect (results) of the process? (Natriello, 1990)

Again the answer comes down to a difference in the interpretation of the two

terms, accountability and professional development, by those evaluating and those

being evaluated. This difference results in a lack of *trust*; mainly the teachers' lack of

trust of the administration.

Larry W. Barber explains how trust must exist between evaluator and teacher

before the evaluation process can be considered a helping, caring process that

provides data to teachers for making decisions about how they can best improve their

own teaching techniques, styles, or strategies." (Barber, 1991).

A lack of trust on the teacher's part can occur for many reasons. The administration maybe viewed as having:

- limited experience in dealing with people,

- a lack of expertise in a particular subject,

- or a limited amount of time in which to get to really know the teacher and classroom environment.

The stories told by Betty and Jan demonstrate the problems that can occur when trust does not exist between the teacher and evaluator. In Betty's case, she did not trust the process because of the administrator's lack of experience in the various teaching styles. Jan lacked trust in the process because she did not feel that her evaluator had taken the time to get to know her or her program.

Perhaps the most crucial component is developing trust between the administration and teachers is the interpretation of the "motive behind the action" of evaluation, as was so eloquently stated by one of the respondents in my university survey.

> The real problem of evaluation is a lack of common understanding between teachers and administrators as to the real purposes of the teacher- evaluation process. (Iwanicki, 1990, pg. 159)

Because the purpose of evaluation is not well understood by either teacher or administrator, the lack of trust invalidates much of the evaluation process. Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin states that:

an effective evaluation system demands teachers'
willingness and ability to act on the outcomes of an
evaluation. An effective evaluation system insists
on trust between teachers and administrators.

(1990, pg. 404)

The subsequent lack of trust produces a "we/they" syndrome, McLaughlin explains,

where teachers are out to protect themselves from the "hidden agendas" they perceive

the administration as having:

Because teacher evaluation is complex, threatening,
and not well-understood, much of current practice
involves 'games' rather than systematic evaluation.

(1990, pg. 404)

These games are a result of teachers' mistrust of the accountability aspect of

evaluation practices.

The Conflict ... In Summary

The studies and literature reveal that the conflict between accountability and

professional development in evaluation policies arise out of a confusion over the

interpretation of the two terms. To evaluators, accountability for professional

development means monitoring for minimum competence. To teachers, accountability

for professional development means growing toward professional excellence. The

role of each member of the evaluation process, administrator and teacher, are

different. Therefore, their motives for evaluation are different. These conflicting

motives create a lack of trust in the process. A recommendation of the surveys is that

more emphasis be placed on professional development in appraising teacher

performance.

> The exploration of alternative school based initiatives which encourage and sustain teacher professional growth is recommended.   (Alberta Education, 1993, pg 301)

The Compromise ... in Accountability *for* Professional Development

With the end-products of accountability and professional improvement being the same; that is, to improve student learning, with the research concluding that present practices of accountability in evaluation do not facilitate teacher improvement, and with survey results recommending the placement of more emphasis on professional development, then some important questions arise. Do school jurisdictions need to have elements of accountability within their evaluation policies and practices? Could not teachers be left to grow professionally on their own terms through such means as self-assessment and working cooperatively with colleagues? Both the results from the mini survey conducted on my university classmates and the provincial survey indicated that teachers feel they learn more from colleague-oriented activities than from those directed from top-down.

> Working directly with colleagues and discussing their work with other members of staff were frequently mentioned by teachers as the ways they preferred to learn.   (Alberta Education Survey, 1993, pg. 299)

While there are many teachers who have the self motivation to become better teachers, there are many others who are content to continue on as they have always done and resist change.

Accountability in evaluation can become an incentive for these teachers to grow professionally for a number of reasons. First for teachers who initiate self-guided

professional development, accountability components offer a chance to show off their accomplishments and growth to other professionals. For teachers who do not take that initiative, accountability components may act as a catalyst for them to take more risks and continue to grow.

A second reason is outlined by Duke and Stiggins:

> Human beings ' potential for self-guided growth is
> limited by their cognitive structures, past experiences,
> and repertoire of skills (Knox, 1977, pg 424-432). Once
> individuals have exhausted their own mental and
> emotional resources, they are unlikely to be motivated
> to grow without the intervention of some external
> impetus. Evaluation feedback can provide the challenge
> found to be vital to stage growth. (1991, pg. 119)

Given the many daily demands of teaching, it is hard for even the best and most dedicated teacher to find the extra time and energy needed to initiate professional growth projects. Outside forces can act as motivators to promote professional development on some level. Perhaps the teachers themselves do not regard evaluation practices as an incentive for growth but the latter may have acted as a catalyst for some form of reflection in preparation for the event even without the teacher being fully cognizant of the process.

A third reason for accountability to continue to exist within evaluation policies is it can help remove the isolation element that can often occur with teaching. It can be the stimulus for some communication with another professional educator. (Natriello, 1990). Natriello contends that:

> Teachers who are seldom evaluated feel isolated
> and undervalued. Teachers who are well regarded
> also appear to desire more frequent evaluation.
> (1990, pg 39)

This notion removes some of the isolation inherent in the profession and allows teachers to have the opportunity to share their ideas and philosophy. A dialogue with a knowledged evaluator can also "stretch" the thinking of a teacher and further promote professional development.

A fourth reason deals with the subsequent involvement of an outside evaluator. There are some inherent flaws in the exclusive practice of self-initiated professional development and self-evaluation. If a teacher were to only self-evaluate without any criteria of accountability any one or all of the following might result:

1. **A lack of objectivity** on the part of the teacher conducting the self-assessment may occur. It is very difficult for any of us to regard our own work in an objective manner.

2. **A lack of accuracy and reliability**. Mediocre teachers tend to be less accurate in self-assessment than superior ones.

3. **A lack of motivation** to change, as individuals may regard themselves as proficient already.

4. **A sense of self-justification** may develop as incompetent individuals may not realize that they are performing at an unsatisfactory level.

5. There is an **inherent potential for self-incrimination** to occur.

6. **A tendency to focus** on cosmetic things like hair, dress or mannerisms rather than more important components of a teacher's program.

                                        (Larry W. Barber, 1990, pg 226-227)

Last, and certainly not least, accountability is a means of protecting public interests. Given that the educational system, whether public or private, is funded by public monies, the fact that educators are accountable to their students is an important issue.

Kenneth A. Strike would concur that there is a need for accountability in the

assessment of teachers. What is needed, he states, is a balance between accountability and professional improvement in assessment practices. (Strike, 1990)

> How then can the two components become balanced in the actual evaluation process?

The Compromise ... Through Portfolio Development

Having established the need for both accountability and professional development in the appraisal of teacher performance, the question remains as to how to ensure that the first enhances the second in the perceptions of teachers.

Two factors must be present in the evaluation process to increase the chance accountability for professional development occurs. First, teacher input into the development of evaluation criteria is needed to foster professional responsibility. (Darling-Hammond, 1985) Second, an expectation of self-evaluation is needed to promote professional growth. (Schon, 1992)

Traditional evaluation policies dictate the criteria leaving little input from the teachers. Encouraging teachers to look at themselves as learners has not been a successful component of the traditional evaluation process. However, from the literature on the use of portfolio assessment for students both factors are listed as a requirement in the development of a portfolio.

> A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the students' efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection. (Paulson, Paulson and Meyer, 1991, pg 60)

I was anxious to begin my case study to support my belief that portfolios could bridge accountability and professional development in the assessment of teacher performance.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Purpose of the Study

The original question that precipitated this study is:

"If present evaluation practices are meant to encourage professional development but are not succeeding in accomplishing this goal, then would the use of professional portfolios be a means for teachers to take responsibility for their own professional growth?"

Another way of wording this question would be:

"Can the 'value' be put back into the evaluation practices of teachers through the development of portfolios?"

The purpose of this study, then, is to investigate whether the use of portfolios in the appraisal of teacher performance reconciles the concept of accountability for professional development. The study is an attempt to discover whether practising teachers achieved system standards in effectively:

- measuring their own professional growth through a reflective process,

- rating their own levels of competence in facilitating student learning, and

- identifying areas to improve through the development of a professional portfolio.

Chapter One outlined the conflict between accountability and professional development in present evaluation practices as perceived by teachers. They would define evaluation as being a 'top-down' activity that allows for little of their input. The intent of this study is to find out if the use of professional portfolios changes the dynamics of the evaluation process,moving accountability from outside the professional development cycle to become a component within it.

Methodology

For this study I have chosen to meet with a group of teachers, who were experimenting with professional portfolios for assessment purposes; and their administrator and their superintendent. This method of research falls into the enthrographic arena, being a case study with myself acting as a participant observer.

The school and school district is in a rural setting in southern Alberta. The community where the school is situated is renowned in the area for its emphasis on excellence in both academic and athletic performance. The school itself contains only the primary grades, Early Childhood Services to grade three.

I chose to study only the one school rather than include other participants for several reasons. First, they were in their second year of using this strategy whereas, to the best of my knowledge, other principals and teachers were only at the preliminary stage of considering the incorporation of professional portfolios into their present evaluation practices. As far as I could ascertain, no other school had taken this project to the pilot stage as had done the school in my study. Secondly, I could draw on a fairly wide array of teachers in one setting, thus simplifying the process of data collection somewhat. Third, the direct participants and principal were wanting some

feedback about this process for their own purposes. They were hopeful this study would give them some insight into their practice of portfolio use.

Gathering the Data

The data was collected by two means. A questionnaire was given to the direct participants to gain some information on:

- past teaching history,

- views of teaching, and

- professional development practices.

I also conducted guided interviews that took on a conversation format. Some examples of questions that were asked were:

- What do you feel is the purpose of teacher evaluation?

- How would you define a portfolio?

- What materials did you put into your portfolio?

- How did you decide what to include/exclude?

- What do/did you hope the contents of the portfolio would say about you as a teacher? a person?

- Why do you feel your administrator wanted teachers to compile a portfolio as part of their evaluation?

(The complete questionnaire and list of interview questions are included in the appendix.)

It is important to note the interaction with direct participants came during various stages of their portfolio development. In some, the interview took place well after the

completion of their portfolios. For one, it occurred while her portfolio was being developed. A tape of our conversation was included as an example of her professional development activities. For another, the interview took place prior to any portfolio development. For the last two participants the interview was an influencing factor on the end product and so must be considered a part of the development process.

Through the use of this open-ended questionnaire and the taped and transcribed interview conversation I attempted to find out:

1. Why the principal chose to initiate this project and implement this strategy.

2. How the direct participants felt about this activity.

3. Whether or not the participants came to regard this form of assessment as contributing to their professional growth.

4. How the superintendent felt about the use of professional portfolios in the appraisal of a teacher's performance.

In total, I interviewed six individuals for the data collection. The complete process took place as depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The Data Collection Process

Principal - Project Initiator

↓

Four Teachers - Direct Participants

↓

Superintendent - Project Evaluator
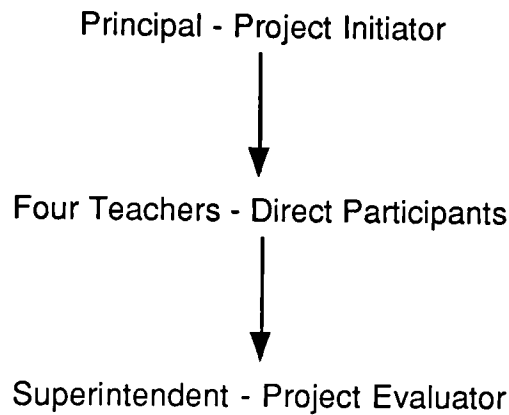
Limitations of the Study

As with any interpretation of data, I will be reading the transcripts from the bias of my own belief systems and background experiences. While I will make every attempt to remain objective, I will undoubtedly bring my own 'slant' to the study. This statement is presented to be a disclaimer more than a problem.

Another drawback is the breadth of the study. It is limited to only one school. The fact that I will not get a cross section of rural and urban schools or a cross section of all grade divisions may affect the findings to some degree.

The direct participants of this study also do not represent the total teaching population. All are women. The only male in the study is the superintendent. While it is not my intent to address the issue of gender differences, it is, nonetheless, a contributing factor to the results of this study.

By the same token, ethnic backgrounds and cultural differences will not be dealt with in the study.

Sometimes it is hard to determine where the issues listed above affect the study. For example, it is significant that only women have composed a portfolio to date at the school. There are many factors contributing to this fact, some that are gender related; some that are not. According to the rotation cycle, the women were next to be evaluated, the men were not. On the teaching staff, women outnumber men seven to one. Therefore, questions like; do women put portfolios together differently than men, or do men reflect on their practices differently than women cannot be addressed in this study.

While we each bring our personalities, background experience, ethnic origins, gender, personal and professional philosophy and grade level experience to the evaluation process, these factors will not be focussed on in the issue of studying professional growth through portfolio development within an evaluative context.

The Literature Connection

Overview

From reading the literature, it became apparent that I was not unique in making the connection from the use of portfolios in student assessment to their use in teacher evaluation. More research literature explain how teachers, like students, engage in an ongoing teaching/learning cycle, the two being unconditionally intertwined. (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Vartuli and Fyfe, 1993; McLaughlin, 1990) The literature on assessing teacher performance states that traditional supervision and evaluation models do not reflect current knowledge and understanding about appropriate assessment practices. (Vartuli and Fyfe, 1993; Strike, 1990; Shulman, 1989) The case appears to be strong for the use of portfolio assessment for teachers as well as

students.

Most of the literature on portfolio assessment for teacher appraisal is on research conducted in the United States. Unfortunately, the research data for this study is based in the American context. Fortunately, there are enough similarities between the American education context and the Canadian that the research is valid and pertinent to my student.

Teacher Assessment Projects

Most of the literature on the use of portfolios in teacher evaluation deals with projects like the Teacher Assessment Project, Ohio Consortium for Portfolio Development, and Tennessee Career Ladder Program.

Most of the research literature is on the Teacher Assessment Program (TAP) which was initiated and coordinated by L.S. Shulman at Stanford University from January, 1988 to August, 1988. Angelo Collins (1991), Tom Bird (1990), Kenneth Wolf (1991), Evans, Vavrus (1990), and King (1991) have written extensively on this body of research. While the project offered some substantive findings, it also offered a very limited perspective. The project was, in review, an artificially constructed environment created to investigate whether accountability for professional development can be achieved through professional portfolios. The teachers were not random volunteers but very carefully selected to represent a cross-section of experience and grade levels. The two main groups were high school biology teachers and elementary reading teachers. The structure of the study was set up to promote professional dialogue and reflection. Together teachers determined criteria for their grade level and subject area. They also were instrumental in the development of the ratings scale used to measure their performance.

While there was much data that was useful to my research, I found it to be very accountability-based. Rating forms to scale reflective comments were used. Attestation sheets were signed by mentors verifying the work contained within the portfolio was indeed typical and not fraudulent. As a consequence this body of research was very heavily oriented toward:

a) the contents of a portfolio

b) rationale and justification statements for inclusion.

Most of the focus of this literature was on the end-product.

University-Based Research

A second compilation of research dealt with professional portfolios at the university level; either for professors or for preservice teachers. Much of this literature was on reflection, or the analytical evaluation of one's own teaching practices and goal setting. (Cole, Lasley, Ryan, Howard, Tillman and Uphoff, 1991, Urbach, 1992, Mathies, Uphoff, 1992, Peterson, 1989) Content was still included but the emphasis was primarily on the process.

Other Literature

At the time of my research the literature on portfolio that best fit in with my study was limited. Paulson, Paulson and Meyer (1991), Vartuli and Fyfe (1993) and Zubizaretta (1994) are quoted frequently as a result. Some of this literature deals with student portfolios but contains relevant information in considering them for teachers.

In Conclusion

I concluded that the research on teacher portfolios had a slightly different focus

than that for the university context because of the unique nature of each system's structural composition. There is less professional autonomy at the school system level than at a post secondary institution. Therefore, proving accountability was of greater consequence to those teachers in the field. The structure of the university, on the other hand, nurtures and facilitates reflective practice with greater ease than is presently possible at a school.

Both content and reflection, though, are vital aspects to teacher assessment and to this study. I categorized the data from the literature into six categories:

1. Definitions of the word 'portfolio'.
2. Reasons for compiling a portfolio.
3. Contents of a portfolio.
4. The benefits of a portfolio.
5. The disadvantages of a portfolio.
6. Considerations for the future use of portfolios.

Rather than dealing with each category at this point in the study, I chose to incorporate the pertinent literature into the research from my study, particularly in Chapter Six, The Interpretation of the Data and Chapter Seven, A Final Appraisal of the Use of Professional Portfolios for Teacher Assessment. In this way, the study will hopefully not be too repetitive and is more focussed.

CHAPTER THREE
THE CASE STUDY

Introduction

I had been discussing my idea of using portfolios as a means of evaluating teachers with several colleagues for a month or two when one replied that she knew of a principal who had already begun experimenting with this method.

Pat lived in a small town in rural southern Alberta. She had slowly worked her way from the classroom to administration, first as a vice-principal and now as the principal of the same elementary school. From various sources I was informed that Pat was the kind of teacher who made a powerful impact on the lives of her students by believing in their abilities and respecting them as individuals. I would often meet Pat at various workshops and inservices. Even in her administrational position she made time to keep up with the latest curriculum and classroom practices. Often she was the only administrator in attendance. It was at one of these workshops that I approached her with the topic of teacher portfolios. Pat expressed her interest in my work and agreed to help me with my research. She extended an invitation to me to come to her school and talk with the teachers who were developing their professional portfolios. I readily accepted her offer.

The Culture of Smalltown Elementary School

For the purpose of this case study the culture of Smalltown Elementary School is described in terms of the priorities of the community at large, the priorities of the

principal and the priorities of the participating teachers as they relate to improving the education of the students.

The Community at Large

The priorities of the community have a great deal of influence on the culture of the school, either directly or indirectly. I did not talk directly to members of the community on this topic for two reasons. First, the principal is a long time resident of the area and I felt her interpretation of community influence was the most pertinent to this study. Second, I knew the town and felt I understood the attitudes and beliefs the community had about education.

In my conversation with Pat I made the comment that despite its reputation for being quite conservative, the community has always been very receptive to educational innovations. Pat reiterated my perception with the explanation that there was an emphasis in Smalltown on succeeding and excelling, especially in the area of education. Innovation is welcomed in both the academic and athletic components. Pat explained that the community "nurtures that innovation and leading out because they want us to be on the 'cutting edge'". Throughout my study the term "cutting edge" surfaces in most of the conversations I had with participants.

Pat explained the townsfolk have a desire for their children to succeed and excel, not only for the latter's benefit but for the glory of the community as well. Therefore, the community is generally supportive, if not nurturing, of "cutting edge" trends in education because of the attention it brings to the area. This community support is integral to the success of many school endeavors.

Pat's Personal Philosophy

> When people ask me what our school is like I always tell
> them that it's like a jazz band with improvisations going on
> all over the school. I really like people to take risks and do
> different things and feel like that even if they make a
> mistake or aren't successful they can stop midstream and
> change and do something different. Anytime during the
> year there's somebody leading out. You know how it is in a
> jazz band, improvising and leading out but there's this
> steady beat. The kids are the important thing. We're trying
> to make kids be successful in school and become better
> citizens of the world and everybody has that same idea. We
> talked about this school and what should we say is our
> main focus. Everyone agreed that our focus is working with
> the children to make them better citizens of the world, make
> them kind and gentle; good people of the world. That's
> what we do. (Principal Pat, 1994)

Pat explained that her main objective for encouraging staff members to
participate fully in their own governance was to allow the community of the school to
move "beyond democracy, where the majority rules, to a point of consensus; where all
become leaders." Pat's interpretation of the role of principal, then, was to guide her
staff to become leaders, and develop their unique leadership style. Her "main desire
is to get staff to recognize their own strengths and what they give to the school, kids
and community." Pat encouraged teachers to grow professionally in their own way.

To facilitate this "self-initiated" professional development, Pat listens carefully to
staff. After hearing where individual interests lie, she would put related material and
information in people's mailboxes. "We, the administrative team, just facilitate what
they [the staff] want to do, so we don't decide where their strengths are or what they
want to do. Strengths are where their interests are. One builds on the other."

Wanting all her staff to take leadership roles and develop leadership traits is

reiterated in Pat's personal mission statement that is typed and taped to the wall above her desk.

> My mission is to empower people and groups to
> significantly increase their performance capability in order
> to achieve worthwhile purposes through understanding and
> living principle-centered leadership.   (Pat, 1993)

It was important to Pat that her staff continue to view themselves as learners for both their own growth and, more importantly, for the growth of the students.

> Teaching is a learning experience for both the children and
> for teachers. You're in there to learn together, to help each
> other grow. (Pat, 1993)

Pat's focus was on improving the education for the students in her school.

> Whatever happens at the grass roots level with the children
> is what's important. Everything has to aim for that --
> whatever you do with parents or the community or with your
> staff, or janitor, or secretary, or anything. (Pat, 1993)

Pat describes her philosophy of education as child-centered.

The Portfolio Experience

Pat believes that by empowering children to learn they will receive a better education. To her, the most important aspect of student education is when 'the children can tell others what it is they learned." By _teaching_ others, students become actively involved in the whole learning process with the teacher. In Pat's opinion, the

main education goals for students should stress creative and independent thinking.

It was this focus on creative and independent thinking that facilitated the staff at Smalltown Elementary to experiment with the use of portfolios for the purpose of student assessment. The local university had placed some extended practicum students into the school which freed some time in which teachers could meet and talk about student assessment using portfolios. The portfolio evaluation for teachers' projects came about as a result of these discussions on assessment practices for students. When the teachers began discussing assessment for students as a means of affirming what the latter knew and to have them set new growth goals, Pat saw the parallel in teacher evaluation practices. She states:

> The purpose of teacher assessment is to affirm the teachers
> for what they are doing and then to have them set growth
> goals.

Pat prefers the word assessment to evaluation. When I asked her to define how she felt the words were different she said:

> evaluation means numbers, looking at specific categories
> imposed from somewhere else. Assessment means
> teachers decide what it is they want me to look at or for
> themselves to look at -- to show areas where they've made
> growth and make some plans for the future.

Pat's definition of assessment is what the literature on teacher evaluation would categorize as professional development in contrast to accountability, which would be placed under her description of evaluation. Pat concurred that the "portfolio process was a focus on professional development more than anything". It was this focus on professional development that determined the choice of teachers for the pilot project.

All five participants had "done so much with professional development" stated Pat, that she wanted to show the superintendent, the community and the district how the teachers were trying to grow professionally. These teachers "have done so much professional development because they want to do well in the classroom". This statement indicates that Pat believes professional growth leads to improved student instruction. The first two participants volunteered. The other three staff members were approached by Pat the following year to see if they would become involved.

The Direct Participants in the Study

Pat expresses great confidence and pride in all her staff but particularly praises the efforts of the five participants in the portfolio project.

All the direct participants in the study are women teachers. All five are experienced teachers having taught from twelve to twenty-one years. Each have spent their entire careers in rural Alberta. The majority of their teaching experience is in regular education in elementary schools - particularly the primary grades - one, two or three. One had taught special education programs and two had experience at the junior or senior high levels.

Each of the teachers could be characterized as risk-takers and self-directed learners. All five indicated that they enjoy the challenge of implementing new strategies and approaches. In describing themselves as teachers they used the words; "busy, innovative, organized, dedicated, hardworking, curious, motivated, enthusiastic, informed, creative and child-centered."

All are committed to the profession and stated their desire to continue to grow as professionals. They demonstrate this commitment through their high level of

involvement in professional development activities.

It is easy to understand why they either volunteered or were asked to be part of this project.

The Superintendent

After interviewing the first two participants of the portfolio project, I decided that there was one other individual whom I needed to talk to about portfolio evaluation. That individual was the superintendent. His views were necessary for two reasons. First, he was the intended audience for the portfolios. Second, the first year participants of the project had not received any responses from him so there was a great curiosity among the participants as to how their portfolios were and would be received.

Peter was a new superintendent - both new to the area and new to the position. He was a young man, late thirties and had worked himself up through the educational hierarchy at a rather quick rate. His views were extremely helpful in providing a "rounded out" rationale for the use of portfolios in evaluating teacher performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THREE PERSPECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Project From the Perspective of the Initiator

Pat's Goals and Definition of a Portfolio

Pat's primary goal for initiating the portfolio project with her teachers was simple - to encourage teachers to take a leadership role in documenting their professional development. In her proposal to the superintendent Pat cited another of her goals, one that has already been quoted as the major intent of most teacher evaluation policies. That intent is to improve instruction in order to improve student achievement.

Pat felt that professional development was best facilitated when the teachers took a leadership role and became "self-motivated leaders in their own right". She also felt professional development occurred best within the context of the school where individually and collectively staff worked toward a common vision through goal setting and reporting.

Pat defined a portfolio in the following way:

> Portfolios are collections of teacher successes gathered
> from the various publics with whom we deal: students,
> peers, administration, parents, community, etc. They may
> include letters, certificates, newspaper articles, photos,
> student work, etc.

Pat explains the importance of reflection in the process although she did not include this aspect in her formal definition.

> Teachers must go through a process of reflection to
> enhance teaching practices.

It's Pat's belief that this reflective process is enhanced when it includes interaction with peers.

> When reflection is part of the interaction with other teachers,
> the pool of ideas, materials, methods expands. There is
> also a collective ability to generate higher quality solutions
> to problems. Peer insights help to make sense of personal
> experiences.

She also states the importance of writing as part of the goal setting process because:

> writing allows teachers to work through the perplexing
> situations using their background knowledge and
> experience to construct new understandings about effective
> teaching.

In the course of the interview with Pat she explains that portfolios are:

> a collection of things. The objective of the collection is to
> provide evidence for teacher assessment; to provide
> evidence of successes with parents, with children, with
> professional growth - evidence of you living your
> philosophy of teaching.

For teachers to gather evidence of how they live their philosophy of teaching, it is important for them to come to understand what their philosophy of teaching is about.

An Emphasis on the Positive

Pat was anxious for not only the "significant others" (namely the superintendent, the community and the district) to discover the worth of her teaching staff but also for the teachers to discover it about themselves.

> I wanted them [the teachers] to look at real hard evidence
> that proves how valuable they are to our school. [Portfolios
> were] a process to make them feel good about what they
> are doing and I think that makes them become better
> teachers. We benefit, the school benefits.

To Pat, the process of developing the portfolio was as important as the end product. She hoped that it would be a positive experience. Pat believes in the power of positive reinforcement to facilitate teacher professional development. On her office wall hung the following:

> Behavior Goals: Personal kindness
> "Kindness in words creates confidence.
> Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.
> Kindness in giving creates love." Lao Tse (604-531 B.C.)

Pat explains how she implemented this behavioral goal of personal kindness in the practice of evaluating her teachers and helping them take on a leadership role.

> I spent time trying to build trust; to tell them they are top
> notch teachers. Positivity is a good motivator for most ...

While Pat emphasized the positive she did admit that this strategy did not work for all.

> Some people are not improvable. [For those] you need to
> state the truth and give evidence. Different people need
> different things.

Even though Pat felt very strongly that the experience of putting together a portfolio was good for the teachers and that "good would come out of it" she also said that an administrator can't expect every teacher to go through the process. She

believes that there needs to be variety in assessment. Not everyone likes to collect

things about themselves. Some don't want to be bothered. She states:

> ... even in being prescriptive they [teachers] will only take
> what they are ready to take. Even if they choose to do it,
> they're going to handle it differently; different combinations,
> change from year to year.

The Need for Talk

To Pat, the most important part of the whole evaluation process is the need for

teachers to "talk about what is desirable in a teacher". Pat hoped that the portfolio

would facilitate such a dialogue among her staff.

> Whatever works is the right way and what's important is
> knowing yourself and what you want to be in the end.

Pat emphasized the need for participants in the study to talk while engaging in

the process. She felt the areas needing to be talked about were:

- What is desirable in a teacher?

- Dialogue with peers to help make sense of personal
  experiences.

- A chance to explain what is in their portfolio. How did it
  support their ideas?

All the participants came to Pat to talk over their portfolios. Most asked her "What do

you want?" As a result, most participants ended up with the same sort of portfolio. Pat

relates that most participants found the process to be a stressful one. They turned to

Pat for guidance in finding a focus for the material they collected.

The Focus of Portfolio Content

The teachers related to Pat (and later to me) that they found focussing on themselves to be a source of discomfort. For that reason, Pat wishes that she had had the teachers make their students the focus of their portfolios.

> If you keep in mind that you're here for the kids then your portfolio starts to look different. You're celebrating the children's success and, of course, then it's your own success.

She feels this focus would have helped eliminate the self consciousness most teachers felt when collecting material on themselves. She states that the process *needs to start and end at the student.* In her attempt to have the teachers demonstrate their professional growth she lost focus on the students. She feels that if she had started with her own portfolio and had put down her own philosophy she would have been better able to have kept that in "my own mind's eye".

The Project From The Perspective of the Direct Participants

The view of the project from the participants was, in some ways, substantially different from Pat's original intent.

The responses of the participants have been categorized and presented as follows:

1) Overviews of their **philosophies of teaching and learning**.

2) General comments on **teacher evaluation**.

3) Views of **professional self-evaluation**.

4) Reasons for the **portfolio project**.

5) **Definitions of portfolio** evaluation.

6) General comments on **using portfolios for evaluation**.

7) Comments on the **contents**.

8) Views of **peer input**.

9) Comments about **the audience**.

10) Reflections about the **process of compiling** to portfolios.

Philosophies of Teaching and Learning

The participants described their philosophy of teaching and learning using the same terms as Pat, their principal.

Whether stated directly or indirectly, all the participants considered their philosophies to be "child-centered"; that is, having the 'child' not the 'curriculum' as their major focal point. To depict their philosophies they used such phrases as:

- teach children as individuals

- directed by needs of child

- teach to individual differences

- educate the whole child

With their philosophies having the child as the focus, it was not surprising that

they described their classroom practices in terms of developing relationships with children. Good relationships with children were needed in order to motivate them. A "personal touch" was important in interacting with students. Learning should "be made fun" for children. A classroom should be a "nonthreatening, safe environment where children feel comfortable" to learn. One teacher summarized this focus on children by stating that a teacher's main job is to "teach"; to teach being defined as the art of interacting with the children. Everything else, including professional development activities, is peripheral to this interaction with students.

To this group of teachers what they did as a profession was more than a career - it was a way of life. They described their profession in the following ways:

- teaching isn't a job, it's a dedication

- teaching is learning

While formal education was defined as:

"a defined structure where goals are set and teachers and children strive to met those goals."

these teachers felt learning and the general concept of education to be all encompassing in their lives and "not just what happens in school".

Within this philosophy of teaching as a way of life these individuals viewed themselves as learners and saw the desire for learning as an essential element to their professional and personal growth. When asked their philosophy, most of the teachers described their own learning style, using words like abstract random, visual, auditory and hands on.

Views on Teacher Evaluation

Their philosophies of teaching and learning flowed over into their views on teacher evaluation with the same words and similar sentiments resurfacing.

Common to each participant was the word positive. Evaluation should be first and foremost positive and reassuring to the teacher. While each stated that there was a need in evaluation for the 'negative' to ensure accountability, it was the positive feedback that made them become better teachers. Thus, accountability and professional development were viewed as separate entities within evaluation practices. One teacher stated that the word evaluation was a "harsh word". Teacher evaluation should be a "celebrating and validating of what you do well". However, after the validation, the teacher felt it is important to have areas of weaknesses identified because in getting "passionate about something my vision narrows". Teachers were wanting accountability *for* professional development to occur.

Although, as one teacher explained, it is "hard to determine what is better" in evaluating good teacher practices. What these teachers wanted was the evaluator "to give critical analysis", some "professional insight" into what was actually occurring in their classrooms, to help them identify inconsistencies between their actions and belief statements. This type of information can not be achieved through observation checklists where, as one participant stated, "scores are relative". The only real way to gain this information is for the evaluator to watch the interaction between teacher and the students and then to talk to the teacher about the children starting with the question, "why?". Evaluation of a teacher should always go back to the children.

For this kind of evaluation to occur the teachers stated that it is important that there be a positive relationship between an evaluator and teachers. A good relationship between evaluator and teacher was stated to be as equally important as

developing a positive rapport with students.

These teachers felt evaluation was a form of professional development activity, since it "let teachers be aware of where they were at in the educational field". Evaluation has the potential to help teachers work on weak areas, to change or improve their classroom practices. Most stated however, that evaluation policies and practices should consider different types of personalities and recognize individual strengths and weaknesses. Differences in students and the "climate of the class" should also be taken into consideration.

Self Evaluation

When asked to comment on self evaluation, the participants gave a variety of responses. A couple of teachers responded that teachers self evaluate all the time when they modify a lesson before teaching it again or when questioning and reflecting upon a new strategy. As teachers "we know where we're at" in regard to a professional standing. Other participants were not so sure about self evaluation, explaining that:

1) it was hard to evaluate yourself;

2) not everyone agrees what good teaching is;

3) some generations and cultures are "raised to wait for others to acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses".

These teachers felt an outside evaluator was necessary to help them defend "philosophically and practically the practices that I'm using". Another drawback to self-reflection was "self evaluation and being analytical can be time consuming and teachers do not often get enough time to indulge in the process".

The Portfolio Project

Doing a self evaluation, or as one teacher put it, "to look at what we're doing", was one of the reasons the participants cited for the purpose behind the professional portfolio evaluation project.

Self evaluation was not the primary purpose attributed to the project, however. All the teachers suggested their motivation to participate was the principal wanting them to try this "latest educational innovation"; for them to be on the "cutting edge". There appeared to be a common understanding of this term throughout the discussion. It was used to describe one of the cultural norms of the school; this was the expectation that teachers experiment with the newest educational strategies.

Secondary reasons were as varied as the individual participants themselves. Self evaluation was already mentioned. Others included:

- if it was good for the students, it must be good for the teachers

- to have another positive assessment of themselves

- to grow and get excited about education so that it would carry over into the classroom.

Definitions of a Portfolio

The participants had some difficulty in defining a portfolio. The most common answer was that it was a resume, or similar to a resume, in that it contained a list of accomplishments. Portfolios were "the resume of the future" because they contain more than a review of past achievements. They also include a written self reflection. The teachers defined portfolios as:

- a product that reflects what I believe

- a self reflecting grouping of things that have been done
  [by a teacher]

- a living statement of who you are, where you've been and
  the direction you're going, personally and professionally

Comments About Using Portfolios for Teacher Evaluation

The participants of this project had mixed feelings about using portfolios in

teacher evaluation.   They felt that compiling a portfolio was a form of self evaluation, a

"personal evaluation with input from others" as one teacher stated. The participants

also saw the activity as a "one time thing" and most expressed a sense of relief to have

completed the task.

Reasons given to support universal usage were varied. While a couple of

participants thought every teacher would benefit from developing a portfolio most felt

that it was not something that should be mandated for all. Portfolios provide a

supportive form of evaluation. They allow the teacher to include outside (that is;

student, peer and community) input into the evaluation process where it might be

professionally unethical for an outside evaluator to ask for such information. Portfolios

can facilitate discussions about job performance. This turned out to be a positive

experience for one participant who stated that as a result there was "an increase in

communication, trust and rapport" between her and one colleague.

Alternatively, many reasons were given to support the case that portfolios are

not for every teacher. Many stated a fear that portfolios could be used as

"brag books" which in turn could foster dysfunctional competition and professional

jealousy. There was also a concern that teachers could say what they wanted in a

portfolio if there was no set criteria. Conversely, there was a concern that evaluators

could read into the contents of the portfolios with whatever intent they wanted. One teacher stated that because of the subjective nature of portfolios this form of evaluation wouldn't "satisfy the masses", that is the general public and other educators who are asking for concrete, tangible outcome measures. Another main criticism was that portfolios do not "capture the interaction with the kids", that they only capture the "peripheral components of teaching, the professional development and extra curriculum activities". Several teachers stated that the "focus on the children was lost". Another concern about portfolio evaluation was the potential loss of interaction between evaluator and teacher. None of the participants in the project had an opportunity for direct interaction with the evaluator, the superintendent, for this evaluation. The last reason why the participants did not recommend portfolio evaluation for every teacher was that they felt that different personalities require different forms of evaluation. One teacher stated that:

- not every individual, either student or adult, feels comfortable in a leadership role.

- Concrete sequential people may prefer a checklist.

- Introspection may be more difficult for some individuals, men maybe more than women, secondary teachers more than elementary.

Contents of Professional Portfolios

The discussions with the participants about the contents of their portfolios were lively. It was an area that had been difficult for each as they had free reign over choosing what to include except for three items.

Pat had asked each to include a rationale for portfolio evaluation, a philosophy

of teaching statement and a copy of their latest teacher evaluation form (Appendix: Evaluation Form #1). While each participant set up the criteria for the contents in a fairly independent manner, with little discussion among each other, all portfolios were fairly similar in the type of material included. Included were:

- examples of lessons

- examples of professional development activities (both in and out of school)

- letters from parents and students

- letters from peers

All of the participants stated that they had initially spent some time with Pat to discuss what should be included in their portfolios. Most tried to keep their contents "honest" by including "a balanced view" of their teaching. This meant including both "positive and negative" feedback from peers, students, parents and school administrators. Personal or self assessment was also included, not only in the philosophy of teaching statement but in reflective comments attached to included material. Contents of the portfolio were of "things I'm proud of" including pictures and a summary of presentations attended as well as given. It was hoped "the contents would demonstrate that I like to keep current, to do the best for the children, that I want to continue to learn and am willing to give the time and effort to learn".

While some of the contents encapsulated their entire career most participants focussed on only the current year's activities. The portfolio included "things I did in a year and how people reacted to it".

All the participants "sweated over" (as one so eloquently stated) what to include in their portfolios. The reason for this frustration was explained by one teacher who

said "just because it [the portfolio] is personal doesn't mean you can put in anything you want".

All of the teachers felt they were "second guessing" what their evaluator would want to see. One teacher did not include something "because she didn't think it would be of interest to the superintendent". Another worried that there was "very little in here of the end result", that is, of test scores. This individual added the comment, "evaluation's got to reflect what the people who are evaluating feel is important and I didn't know what that was".

Along with having trouble deciding what to include to please the superintendent, the teachers also had trouble deciding what to include to satisfy themselves. Trying to capture the essence of who they were as professionals proved to be extremely difficult. "How much outside of school material do I include?" was a question one teacher was compelled to ask since "it is difficult to show myself as a professional without showing the personal". The concept of where the personal ends and the professional begins was also captured in the comment "the contents of this portfolio wasn't all of me". This individual went on to say that the portfolio "doesn't capture my personality or interaction with kids".

Even when the contents were chosen the teachers agonies were not over. Then came the aspect of labelling and categorizing the material, dividing it into sections. One teacher commented on the difficulty of dealing with the contents in this manner by saying the following:

> . . . we kind of almost dehumanize it [our teaching] when we put it into different components; we try and break it up into different pieces . . . or put everything under all these headings when really it's just one thing.

To get around the difficulties of choosing and categorizing the content several of the participants made some recommendations.

- I will stick with my philosophy and build on that.

- Maybe we should include a photo section [to better capture the essence of the classroom].

One teacher felt her portfolio had "room to expand"; where things could be added such as "personal growth initiatives".

Peer Support

Each of the participants had been either the initiators or recipients (or both) of written feedback from peers on their teaching. Incorporating peer input into their evaluation process was a 'two-edged sword' for most of the participants. Comments on the plus side included such statements as:

- Peers "need contact with others [peers]".

- I learn from listening to others.

- I bounce ideas off other people. I need to talk to others. I need to hear what they say. I need to look at what others have done.

- The best critical analysis is from your peers.

- Teachers set their own criteria "by talking with other professionals".

All the teacher participants emphasized that they felt their peers in this school were very supportive of each other. One teacher explained the staff support in this way:

> It's a really close knit group. I think it's the small town and
> then it's also part of "Pat" because she reinforces that
> loyalty type of thing . . . we have an exceptional staff, I
> believe . . . everybody is dedicated to the cause.

Even with being a "tight knit group" the participants found flaws in asking for peer input to be put in their portfolios. One concern was that because the staff was "protective of each other against the 'outside'" (namely the rest of the non educational community) the comments they gave to each other were not always objective. While the statements from peers "make you feel good" they were often "too positive". One teacher called the comments from others "artificial" because they had not spent enough time in each other's classrooms nor had they had "the time to talk about teaching" and share their ideas. This teacher felt it unfair to ask peers for their comments.

> . . . it's sometimes hard to take compliments from people
> you know and I hope they're being objective and can say
> good things and maybe things I need to work on . . .

Not all the participants felt qualified to evaluate their peers' teaching. Some expressed concern that "miscommunication would result" because of a lack of understanding about the intent of some strategy or practice.

One teacher characterized the dilemma with peer input in this manner:

> It's a little bit like the chicken and the egg. You know you
> can't respect other people until you respect yourself. But
> quite often you can't respect yourself until you think other
> people respect you.

The Audience

While all the participants identified the superintendent as the audience for whom they were compiling their portfolio, they weren't sure if he was the one who would benefit the most from this form of evaluation. Some teachers felt that he would only want to see results and would flip through it looking for items that matter to him. To accommodate the superintendent in this process, some participants determined the order, organization and overview of the contents of their portfolios accordingly. Others disagreed with this focus and felt he could benefit from learning more about their personal skills as a teacher.

Parents were identified as another audience. Teachers felt parents would benefit from looking through a teacher's professional portfolio. They believed a portfolio would give parents a feel for a teacher's style and values and could help them determine if that teacher was right for their child.

All the participants agreed that the audience who benefited the most from producing the portfolio was themselves. 'Me' was the unanimous answer to the question, "Who is the portfolio for?"

The Process

The teachers gave mixed reviews when they reflected on the process of putting their portfolios together. All of them stated a sense of discomfort in focussing on themselves. They used words like "unnerving", "uncomfortable" and "vulnerable" to describe how they felt about gathering data on their teaching. Many teacher participants used the word "bragging" and said "it didn't seem right" to draw attention to themselves.

They described the process of pulling the information together as "hard, not

simple, ambiguous and time consuming". They often used the word 'second-guessing' to depict their uncertainty at what to include or how to organize their information in a way that would be pleasing to the superintendent.

Some found it was difficult to write down their philosophy or rationale. One teacher felt that putting thoughts in written form was "less human" than if it was done verbally. "You say more than you ever write in analyzing situations" she explained.

Despite the discomfort and hard work, all the participants stated that the process 'forced' them to look at what they are doing in their classrooms. Though not all felt this reflection was of value. Some of their comments on the reflective process were as follows:

- It was an anti-climactic reflection because it was a review of what I had already thought about.

- The process could help teachers identify some contradictions in their own teaching as it has for me.

- The process reinforced the view I had of my teaching already.

- The process did not produce a good feeling because I'm a heck of a lot deeper than this binder.

- The process makes you question if what you're doing is right.

- The process made me happy, gave me zest and want to do better.

Several teachers stated that the process was 'good for organization'. They found that categorizing and organizing the information was as time consuming as the initial gathering. One teacher described the organizing as "an emerging process".

> What I started out with . . . the idea I started out with was
> very different than what I ended up with.

Teachers felt that while it was a great deal of work initially keeping the portfolios

current by adding or deleting information would not be as difficult.

The teachers did describe the process as "isolating". While some of the

teachers looked at each others' portfolios and had an initial discussion with the

principal, they mainly worked on their portfolios independently of each other. Several

stated that they felt a need for more "human interaction".

The Project From the Perspective of the Superintendent

To the teachers in the project developing their portfolios was primarily a

personal professional development activity which they hoped would speak well of

them in an evaluative sense.

To the superintendent, who received the portfolios, the project was viewed in

much the same way. He regards portfolios as a reflective reaffirmation on the

teacher's personal growth as a professional. He noted:

> . . . self-assessment is excellent because I think it helps
> teachers to develop a picture of themselves and of where
> they need to go.

He felt the process they went through in developing a portfolio was very beneficial to

them and provided an excellent base for dialogue at the school level between the

principal and the teacher.

He questioned the use of the portfolio for the accountability aspect of

evaluation, however. While he felt the information and the coinciding reflective comments were good he was not sure if he could tell how the teacher was actually doing in the classroom from looking at the contents of the portfolio alone. He stated that while all good teachers are self-reflective not all self-reflective teachers are good.

> . . . if this teacher was a bad teacher I'm not sure this binder wouldn't look exactly the same.

He went on to explain that "this [the contents of the portfolio] is more conspicuous by what it doesn't say than what it does say". In his opinion missing were:

- the particular success level of students

- evidence of effective evaluation

- evidence of classroom control

- justification for teaching strategies (What was the objective for that and was that objective achieved through that method?)

- areas to be improved in

- timelines for meeting goals

As a superintendent he required such "hard data" for summative purposes "to terminate" a teacher. According to the superintendent, a teacher may have "good pedagogical things going on in the classroom" but still be ineffective in dealing with parents or "may not evaluate [students] well". From his position, evidence of these skills is important in assessing a teacher. He feels that an outside person is needed to assist the teacher in the reflective process in order to prevent "tunnel vision".

He also felt evaluation, portfolios or otherwise, should not be a once in a while

activity:

> . . . evaluation should be ongoing . . . I think that goals
> should occur from year to year, not once every five years

because as he concluded:

> You get complacent after a few years in the classroom and
> you forget a few of the things that you were good at when
> you first started.

He then provided me with a copy of a new evaluation form he was working on.

(Appendix: Evaluation Form #2)

CHAPTER FIVE

EMERGENT THEMES FROM THE STUDY

This project began by identifying the general dissatisfaction among teachers with present evaluation practices. The cause of this discontentment is the dual roles of teacher assessment - accountability and professional development. While evaluation policies and the literature espouse that accountability can be a catalyst for professional development (Strike 1990) this concept is not reconciled in the minds of most teachers. They view accountability as an outside force with a hidden agenda. Professional development is still considered as a separate entity.

The literature states effective assessment practices incorporate teacher input into the evaluation criteria and self-reflection (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Since portfolio development contains these two elements (Collins, 1991) I was positive that portfolio assessment would create _effective_ assessment. By effective, I mean that teachers would begin to perceive how accountability can mesh with professional development through the development of their own professional portfolios.

I was surprised to learn from my research that this did not occur.

In the case study, Pat's intent for initiating the portfolio project was to encourage the teachers to take a leadership role in the appraisal of their practices. She hoped portfolios would allow her teachers some professional autonomy where they could look at their individual needs and determine their own areas of improvement and professional development. Pat did not even like to use the word, evaluation.

> Evaluation means numbers, looking at specific categories imposed from somewhere else.

This view of evaluation, based on the assumption that teachers need to be controlled, monitored and regulated to ensure they perform up to a standard set of expectations, contradicts Pat's "jazz band" style of administration where teachers are valued for their individual strengths. Therefore, Pat preferred to use the word, assessment.

> Assessment means teachers decide what it is they want me to look at or for themselves to look at; to show areas where they've made growth and make some plans for the future.

Pat also hoped the portfolio project would facilitate professional dialogue among her staff.

Despite Pat's intentions, the comments from the teachers in the project sounded very similar to the ones heard across the province. Recurring themes ran through the participants conversations - themes that connect their stories of portfolio evaluation with those of other teachers about teacher evaluation in general. They are the themes of: the cutting edge, second guessing, tunnel vision and isolation.

The Theme of the 'Cutting Edge'

All participants of the Smalltown Project felt one motive behind the portfolio project was to be on the "cutting edge". In that school this phrase is culturally accepted to mean an innovative concept. A cutting edge has the potential to bring either pain and discomfort, if mishandled, or ease and comfort, if properly handled. The portfolio experience appeared to provide both pain and pleasure to the participants. The process created discomfort but the product was a source of pride.

The teachers did not fully grasp Pat's intent for the use of portfolios. They did not connect portfolio assessment with a greater leadership role in the evaluation

process. They had not researched about the use of portfolios for teachers or experimented with them outside of the formative evaluation procedure. They either chose to be part of the project out of curiosity or out of a sense of duty. While the teachers did not understand Pat's motive for the project they appeared to <u>trust</u> her. However, they were not so certain about the superintendent, who was responsible for the final evaluation. Not fully understanding or accepting his motive lead the teachers to try very hard to please; not themselves, but the superintendent.

The Theme of 'Second Guessing'

The participants in the study used the term 'second guessing' in describing the process of putting together their portfolios. While they used the phrase to express their frustration over knowing what to include in their binders of data, the issue is really much bigger. The teachers did not know what to include or how to organize their material because they were unsure of <u>how</u> they were being judged. They wondered what criteria the superintendent would use as an indicator of competence. They wondered if this criteria was the same as theirs. The lack of a set of standards or guidelines created a great deal of stress in the teachers. The teachers had an especially difficult time with this activity because, as one participant explained, "we have been socialized to wait until someone else tells us what we are doing is good or bad". They either felt uncertain about their choices or felt they were bragging.

Even when given the opportunity to take a lead in evaluation the teachers were unsure where or how to begin. The reason for this uncertainty is a result of evaluation being primarily used to rate teacher performance against a predetermined scale of standards. Kenneth A. Strike explains the role of teacher evaluation is:

> to monitor teachers to ensure compliance with policy. Teachers are judged by administrators primarily in terms of how effectively they contribute to the accomplishment of externally determined objectives. (1990, pg 361)

Having been through such 'top-down' evaluation practices, where the criteria was pre set and well defined, it is little wonder the participants tried so hard to second guess what the superintendent wanted. Despite being given a fairly free reign over the contents, the teachers were still suspicious of being judged against a set of "externally determined objectives". They tried to cover all bases by including both negative and positive sides of their teaching. The idea of labelling components of teaching into "good" and "bad", is a residual sentiment from having predetermined criteria against which teachers have been measured and subsequently rated.

The distrust of the process on the part of teachers was justified to a great degree. The superintendent did, in fact, have an agenda. He found the portfolios to contain minimal examples of accountability to his standards. While the teachers had presented with adequate data on their professional growth, he was looking for the outcome of this growth on student achievement. He also wanted evidence of procedures for student evaluation, classroom control and communication with parents.

The purpose of the portfolio project did not match the outcome because all the stakeholders had a different intent.

Since the teachers concentrated so much effort on second guessing the superintendent's wishes, they did not experience the professional autonomy that Pat had intended. Perhaps as a result, none of the teachers made "plans for the future" by setting goals either for themselves or for their students. Nor did they view the portfolio process as a form of professional development.

The Theme of Tunnel Vision

The discussion of intent not matching the outcome also surfaced when the teachers were talking about their own teaching. They explained how they often developed 'tunnel vision' when implementing a new strategy. They were so focussed on the idea of the technique they often were not fully aware of the results. They were not able to critically analyze; that is, identify their strengths and weaknesses, completely on their own. For that reason, the teachers appreciated the input from an outsider, someone who could point out the contradictions in their teaching practices to them.

The superintendent also addressed this phenomenon of tunnel vision. He was concerned about the ability of teachers to be objective about their classroom practices. His concern was not for the teachers in this project but for marginal teachers, teachers he expected to dismiss.

The teachers in the project were also anxious about tunnel vision on the part of the superintendent. They felt that they were unable to present everything about their teaching in a portfolio. They wanted the superintendent to get an accurate profile of their abilities and were unsure as to how best to capture them. Suggestions for videos, photographs, audiotapes were all attempts to provide a more complete picture of themselves as professionals. Their interaction with children was the hardest to present. Most of the teachers did not feel satisfied that the superintendent would be able to see them as a person. The attitude of "there's more to me than this binder" was common.

The Theme of Isolation

A theme surfaced from this focus on 'self'; the theme of isolation. The process was isolating for the participants because they had no contact with the primary evaluator. The teachers spoke briefly to Pat and each other but the conversation revolved around survival questions of what to include and not around philosophical issues. Instead of fostering professional dialogue among the staff, as Pat had hoped little talk occurred.

Even though the teachers had stated that they learn best from peers they turned to each other for minimal assistance. In fact, rather than fostering collegial relationships, participants cited how easy the process could have turned into dysfunctional competition. The fact that this process was not considered a professional development activity, but one of accountability, could be the reason why the teachers were reluctant to share their ideas with each other. Their past experiences with evaluation may have conditioned them to believe that not only were they being measured against a set criteria but also against each other.

The format of the process also contributed to the feeling of isolation. Pat felt that the act of writing a philosophy brought teachers to a deeper level of understanding of themselves. The teachers, though, felt talk was a more enriching way of self-discovery. As one participant said, "talk is more human".

In Conclusion

The use of portfolios, in and of themselves, did not alleviate the major concerns that teachers and researchers voice about other forms of teacher evaluation. In

conclusion the major areas of concern arising from portfolio use are:

1) teacher isolation through limited verbal communication

2) data to demonstrate accountability issues (i.e. objectives equally outcomes)

3) lack of focus on interaction with students

4) difficulty in achieving objective critical analysis

5) minimal if any goal setting

6) limited awareness of process as being one of professional development.

Certain factors must be addressed by administrators and teachers in order for the effective use of portfolios in appraising teacher performance.

CHAPTER SIX

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

In interpreting the data I have compiled a list of seven basic needs that must be addressed to alleviate the tensions created in the use of portfolios for appraising teacher performance. While these needs arise from the specific experiences of the teachers who took part in the Smalltown Elementary Portfolio Project, similar concerns have emerged from the literature.

Seven Basic Needs to Consider Before Implementing
Portfolio Evaluation

1) The Need for a Common Definition

    • Process vs Product

    • Audience and Purpose

2) The Need for Professional Relationships

    • Support

    • Supervision

3) The Need for Professional Dialogues

    • Beginning

    • Middle

    • End

4)   The Need for a Clear Focus of Content

  • A Narrow Perspective

  • Goal Setting

5)   The Need for a Variety of Content

  • A Broad Perspective

  • Individuality

6)   The Need for Critical Analysis of Content

  • Self Reflection and Evaluation

  • Outside Perspectives

7)   The Need for Time

While these needs will be discussed separately it is important to recognize that they are not independent of each other but are interrelated and interdependent. Neither are they in any particular order. I have chosen to put them in a sequence that made sense to me. That does not mean they cannot be reorganized. The only matter of real consequence is that they do _need_ to be considered when using portfolios.

Figure 5.1: Seven Basic Needs for Portfolio Use

```
                        Variety
                          ▲
                          |
  Relationships ◤         |         ▼ Dialogue
           ◥              |        ◤
                          |      
                        Time
                 ◤        |        ◥
  Critical Analysis       |         ◣ Focus
                          |
                          ▼
                      Definition
```
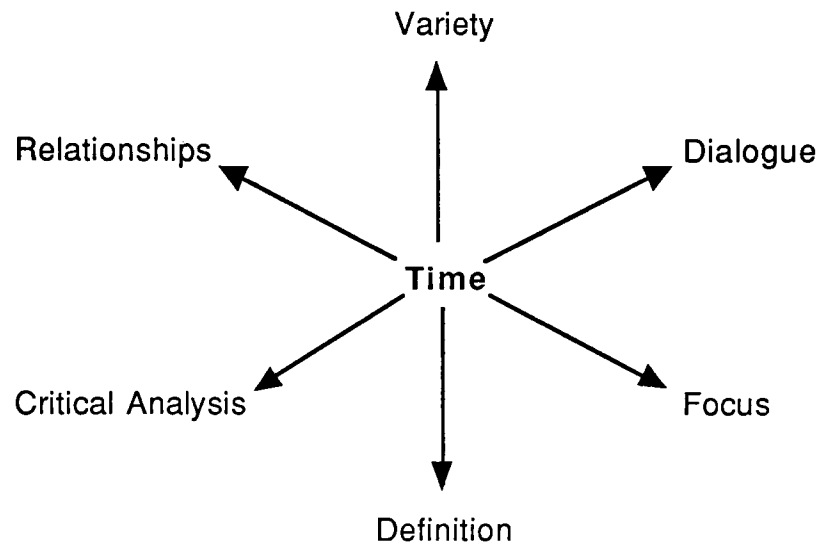
The Need for a Common Definition

Although the word portfolio has been familiar to some professionals for many

years (architects, artists and fashion models to name a few) the term is relatively new

to educators. Since it is a much used word in many areas of society, it is important for

educators to come to a common understanding of what a 'portfolio' means in

education circles.

The main focus of much of the literature on professional portfolios for teachers is

on describing the potential uses and kinds of data that should be included in portfolios.

Authors appear to have an easier time defining the term by explaining what it is not,

rather than what it is.

For example, according to Angelo Collins, a teacher's portfolio is <u>not</u> the same as those found in other professions. An artist's portfolio shows only the best work; a pilot's or investment broker's portfolio contains work in progress; a salesperson's portfolio demonstrates the ability to deliver someone else's product; a boy scout or girl guide's portfolio shows work completed with the aid of a mentor; and a university professor's portfolio holds a compilation of all the above, work in progress, work completed, and best work. (Collins, 1990).

The teachers from Smalltown Elementary also had difficulty defining a professional portfolio. Many of them equated it to being like a resume for teachers, or as one teacher stated, a "resume of the future".

As educational researchers grapple with the use of portfolios for teacher evaluation practices, the definition seems to have evolved.

> The term 'portfolio' seems to have evolved from "a portable
> case for holding loose sheets of paper" (The American
> Heritage Dictionary) to a display case for selected contents,
> to a case for competence.   (Biddle, 1992)

The definitions for portfolios from current literature fall into three categories - product, process and a combination of product/process.

The first type of definition focusses on the portfolio as <u>product</u>, not unlike the descriptions of portfolios for artists, architects, models, salespeople or investors. The 'product' definitions are most prevalent in the literature on portfolios used for accountability. Examples of the 'product' definition are as follows:

> A portfolio is a cumulative record, a coherent body of
> evidence, written assignments, direct observations, etc. that
> documents the teaching capacities of each candidate.
>   (Vartuli & Fyfe, 1993)

> A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student [teacher]
> work that exhibits the students' [teachers'] efforts, progress
> and achievements in one or more areas.
>   (Paulson, et al, 1991)

> A portfolio is a container that holds a collection of
> documents. The documents provide evidence of some
> knowledge, skill and/or disposition.   (Collins, 1990)

> A portfolio is a documentation that describes the full range
> of the abilities of a teacher.   (Urbach, 1992)

In each of the above quotes, the end product, that is the completed portfolio is the

primary focus.

A second category of definition focusses on the portfolio as a _process_. This type

of definition is found in the literature describing portfolios as professional

development. The act of putting the portfolio together which, in essence, becomes the

professional development activity, was considered more important than the end

product. Some definitions that capture the process component are as follows:

> A portfolio, then, is a portfolio when it provides a complex
> and comprehensive view of [teacher] student performances
> in context. It is a portfolio when the [teacher] student is a
> participant in, rather than the object of, assessment. Above
> all, a portfolio is a portfolio when it provides a forum that
> encourages [teachers] students to develop the abilities
> needed to become independent, self-directed learners.
>   (Paulson, et al, 1991)

> A portfolio permits students [teachers] to analyze,
> synthesize, integrate, and critique values, beliefs and
> concepts related to teaching. In doing so they gain a fuller
> sense of self and of the institutions in which they hope to
> teach.
> (Cole, Lasley, Ryan, Swonigan, Tillman and Uphoff, 1991)

The literature of portfolio as process is more limited in quantity and either is in articles related to pre-service teachers or on professional development for practicing teachers.

The third and last category of definition is a teacher's portfolio being both a process and a product. This definition brings together the aspects of accountability and professional development and is found mainly in articles dealing with the professionalism of teaching. Some definitions incorporating both process and product are as follows:

> They [portfolios] can serve both product and process functions. For practising teachers, they provide a series of entries demonstrating the teacher's philosophy in practice in relation to the learning contexts which individual teachers perceive as important. It is as a process that portfolios can be significant in development reflection among students and teachers. When students and teachers make decisions about the way in which they organize portfolios they begin to reflect and develop an understanding of professional roles and responsibilities. (Paulson, et al, 1991)

> The portfolio is both a product and a process.
> (Terry & Eade, 1983)

> A summative portfolio is a purposeful collection of teacher's work, showing that a teacher has engaged in self-reflection.
> (Vartuli & Fyfe, 1993)

> The professional portfolio itself is the product of, and cannot be separated from, the evaluation and reflection processes required to produce it. (Winsor, 1994)

It is the reflective process combined with a collection of artifacts that differentiates the definition of portfolios for teachers from that of other professionals.

Recognizing that a teacher's portfolio can be both a product and a process is

vital when considering their use for evaluation/assessment purposes. Teachers must be given prior knowledge as to how much emphasis will be placed on each of these aspects. That is, they need to consider the purpose for their portfolios.

Figure 6.1: Balancing the Process and Product in Portfolio Assessment
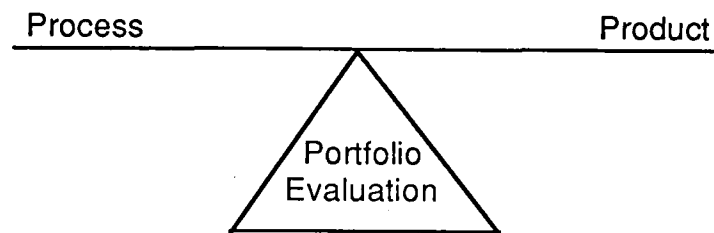
The intent of the portfolio must equal the actual outcome. For example, the intent of the principal of Smalltown Elementary in asking her staff to compile their professional portfolios was so they could demonstrate their leadership abilities to the superintendent. The outcome was that the superintendent was more interested in seeing examples of student performance. The intent or purpose did not match the outcome of this project. Therefore, while the activity may have fostered some professional development, it did not meet the requirements of accountability to the satisfaction of all participants.

The only way the balance can be achieved between the process and product and intent and outcome components of portfolio evaluation is for the teacher to have a clear understanding of who will be the audience of the portfolio data and who will be judging the portfolio contents.

Discussion about the audience leads into the second need.

The Need for Professional Relationships

Vartuli and Fyfe (1993) state that the relationship between evaluator and teacher must be more than the latter providing a "sampling of competence". The teacher and evaluator must also "coordinate the points of common understanding" including the development of common criteria for the portfolio contents.

While the teachers of the Smalltown Project had a comfortable relationship with the principal, they did not have her as the evaluator or audience of their portfolios. The phrase "second-guessing" was commonly used as the participants described how they selected materials for the contents of their portfolios.

Instead of fostering trust in the process, uncertainty and unease resulted. Several participants stated that if they had not been such a collegial staff, competition could have been a result of the project.

Having support from either a supervisor, mentor, or peers is important during the development of the portfolio to help alleviate feelings of isolation, especially if it is being used to assess teacher performance. John Zubizaretta (1994) explains just how vital a mentor can be, in producing a portfolio, especially for the first time.

> Writing one's first portfolio in isolation does not produce high-quality work; collaboration is essential, and mentors are indispensable. One of the most invigorating, rewarding, and crucial experiences for a beginner writing a portfolio is the collaborative effort between the instructor and the mentor, who helps steer the direction of the document to meet the needs of instructional improvement or assessment. Collaboration - especially if the mentor is an outside consultant either from one's own discipline or from another - ensure a fresh, critical perspective that encourages cohesion between narrative and appendix.

Vartuli and Fyfe (1993) add that in putting a portfolio together a teacher can find peer input in the form of support, mentoring, coaching and data collection valuable. (It is not unlike the process of working with a professor in developing a master's project.)

Shulman (1987) states that portfolio assessment can "help socialize teachers to new collegial roles and stimulate new configurations of relationships at the school site". Collins (1991) states that:

> Portfolios provide opportunities for building collegial
> relationships that are focussed on substance - the portfolio
> entry.   (Collins, 1991, pg 159)

While portfolio assessment may have the potential to foster professional relationships, this was not the experience of the teachers from the Smalltown Portfolio Project. However, it is through positive professional relationships with peers and evaluators, for both support and supervision, that the components of accountability and professional development can be assimilated into the evaluation process.

The Need for Professional Dialogue

Angelo Collins (1991) describes four assumptions that were made about teaching that guided the study of the use of portfolios in teacher assessment in the Teacher Assessment Project.

Assumption 1 - Teaching is a complex task.

Assumption 2 - Teaching takes place within a context.

Assumption 3 - Professional teachers have a store of
theoretical as well as practical knowledge.

Assumption 4 - People who best understand and are
                     qualified to evaluate teachers are other
                     teachers.

These assumptions prompted the development of teacher interaction groups as part of the portfolio process. The groups were formed by subject area and grade level. Teachers discussed what they felt constituted good teaching and together they determined the criteria and format for their portfolios.

A formal interaction did not occur among the teachers of the Smalltown Elementary Project. Each of the participants spoke with Pat individually and on an informal basis, at the initial stage of their portfolio development. Some of the teachers chatted among themselves about contents. However, most of the process was completed by the teachers independently and in isolation from each other. They did not even have the benefit of the traditional dialogue between evaluator and evaluatee since they had no personal contact with the superintendent. The participants never had the opportunity to converse with the superintendent about their portfolios although he and the principal had initially discussed the project.

So despite the fact that all the participants stated they learn best from peers, they had little opportunity to do so with their portfolio projects. This contradicts the literature which describes portfolios as providing a means to facilitate professional dialogue among both peers and evaluators. Shulman (1987), Vartuli and Fyfe (1993), and Collins (1991) all report the benefits of portfolios as a vehicle to promote professional talk. Paulson (et. al. 1991) even goes so far as to propose that instruction and assessment can co-exist within the portfolio process through the interaction between evaluator and the developer of the portfolio.

From studying the Smalltown Elementary Portfolio Project, it appears that asking teachers to put together a portfolio does not in and of itself facilitate either

professional relationships or dialogues, both of which are essential to the professional development and accountability aspects of evaluation. Dialogue is especially vital to the 'process' component of portfolio assessment so that teachers and evaluators; a) come to a common understanding of intent and criteria and b) are better able to reflect on their practices and come to a fuller understanding of them.

For professionalism to be fostered through the use of portfolios, professional conversation must occur throughout the entire process - prior to beginning, in the middle, during the data collection and at the end, upon completion.

Initial conversations should take place between teachers and the individual who will be making the final evaluation, whether that be peers, administrators, superintendents or a combination of all three. This is necessary so criteria and a common focus can be collaboratively set. If there is a district policy with set criteria, then some conversation needs to occur to clarify its meaning. Vartuli and Fyfe (1993) refer to this as coordinating "points of common understanding". It is during this time that topics such as 'what is teaching?' are discussed and philosophies of teaching are debated. This, too, is where teachers should have the opportunity to question and gain insight into their practices, always keeping in mind the question "what does this mean for the students?"

Conversations during the portfolio development can be held not only with evaluators and administrators but ideally with parents, students, other educators (such as consultants and professors) and, of course, peers. Dialogues with all these individuals can help teachers to further clarify the focus of the portfolio and gain a broader perspective on their practice. These 'others' may even be asked to contribute comments or in the case of students, work samples, to the teacher's portfolio.

During the end or culmination process, mentors and evaluators can provide-

invaluable assistance in helping teachers reach a higher level of self reflection about their teaching. Pamela Winsor describes three levels of reflection and self-evaluation that mentors can be aware of during a formal portfolio conference.

> Analytical Level - Answers such questions as, what did my students and I actually do and learn? What might explain the differences in student responses and behavior?
>
> Affective Level - Answers such questions as, How do I feel about my teaching? and why do I feel this way? What might explain these feelings, attitudes and reactions?
>
> Inquiry Level - Answers such questions as what are the assumptions or paradigms upon which my teaching is based? How else might my teaching and responsibilities be perceived? What are the long range effects of this? How does my teaching and thinking compare with previous beliefs and interactions? How do my current thinking and actions fit into the larger perspective of my professional development?   (Winsor, 1994)

Evaluators and teachers can both benefit from using such questions in assessing a teacher's performance during an evaluation conference session. Such conversations can also help teachers explain why certain artifacts were chosen to be on display in their portfolios.

Finally, conversations at the completion of the portfolio should ultimately focus upon how the strategy, practice or belief is beneficial to the students. The principal, teachers and superintendent from the Smalltown Project all feel the link back to the children was missing in their portfolio displays. Any form of professional development and accountability of teachers must return to the students they serve.

The last question to be considered, then, must be "Where does the teacher go from here?" This leads to the discussion of the focus.

The Need for a Clear Focus of Content

Analyzing the effectiveness of one's teaching with input from others sets the basis for setting goals for both the students and oneself. Determining what data to include from the past to plan for the future was a process not well understood by the teachers in the Smalltown Project. For that reason, they had difficulty determining what to include or exclude in their portfolios.

There was little opportunity for the teachers to talk about their portfolios and all were trying to "second guess" the superintendent's agenda. Knowing the purpose and audience of the portfolio is a crucial first step in the preparation process. Vartuli and Fyfe (1993) best describe how to determine a focus for the portfolio.

1. Teacher and evaluator gather baseline data. What area or skill does the teacher need or want to concentrate on?

2. Teacher and evaluator set goals for the teacher.

3. Teacher describes environment (including personal philosophy, description of class, community, etc.)

4. Teacher collects data from a variety of sources to demonstrate the meeting of the goals.

5. Evaluator observes and confers with teacher.

6. New goals are set.

Through this collaborative process the purpose and audience are clearly defined and as a result the portfolio is narrow in focus allowing teachers to concentrate on a portion of their career.   The teachers in Smalltown found it an overwhelming task trying to decide what to include - an entire career, an entire year, professional and

personal elements, and peripheral components of teaching. Most of the teachers

merely gathered items and then desperately tried to figure out how to organize them.

In hindsight most of them would choose to have a narrower focus given the opportunity

to redo the task. In the future they would:

1) Focus and expand on the philosophy of teaching.

2) Demonstrate leadership abilities (e.g. giving examples
   of involvement in professional development activities).

3) Focus on a particular teaching strategy.

4) Focus on year's goal (e.g. community involvement).

5) Provide a year's overview.

6) Demonstrate growth as an independent individual -
   professional and personal.

7) Demonstrate interaction with students (may include
   classroom management strategies, discipline ideas,
   etc.).

8) Provide an overview of teaching performance including
   • description of strategy
   • sample lesson
   • evaluation strategy
   • student results
   • analysis

This latter suggestion is the format suggested by much of the literature

(including articles by Shulman (1987), Zubizaretta (1994), Collins (1990), Bud (1991)

Cole, et. al. (1991)). Cole, Lasley, Ryan, Swonigan, Tillman and Uphoff state that

when teachers make decisions about the way in which they organize portfolios, they

begin to reflect and consequently develop an understanding of roles and

responsibilities. Teachers in the Teacher Assessment Project at Stanford University were given five categories to gather data that indicated growth. These categories were designed to demonstrate:

1. **Professional responsibility to**
   - parents, students and the community
   - continuous improvement
   - developing a thoughtful pursuit of a specific purpose of teaching

2. **Command of subject matter**
   - knowing how to distinguish good from bad

3. **Content - specific pedagogy**
   - ability to convey the substance and value of subject matter

4. **Class organization and management**

5. **Student - specific pedagogy**
   - the ability to work students and individual persons.
                                        (Cole, et. al, 1991, pg 10)

Angelo Collins (1991) suggested that "portfolios contain evidence of change and growth, and of a responsiveness to the context." The contents should include:

1. **artifacts**
   - actual samples of usual work such as lesson plans, notes, letters to parents.

2. **reproductions**
   - examples of work that has no permanence such as videotaped lessons, copy of student notes, pictures of bulletin board displays.

3. **attestations**
   - reports from others, parents, former students, colleagues and administrators.

4. productions
- evidence prepared for purpose of documenting knowledge and skills in the portfolio such as a journal, written reflection and document captions.

<div align="right">(Collins, 1991, pg 148)</div>

John Zubizaretta gives a clear outline of the contents for a beginning teacher's portfolio. However, the list is applicable for a teacher at any stage in his/her career.

1. Assigned Teaching Responsibilities

2. Reflective Statement of Teaching Philosophy

3. Methods and Strategies

4. Description of Course Materials: Syllabuses, Assignments, and Handouts

5. Products: Evidence of Student Learning

6. Description and Analysis of Student and Peer Evaluations

7. Professional Development of Teaching: Conferences, Workshops, Curricular Revisions, and Experiments

8. Short and Long Term Teaching Goals

9. Appendix

<div align="right">(Zubizaretta, 1991, pg 324)</div>

Zubizaretta does qualify his list by adding:

Of course, the emphasis and content of a portfolio will vary according to the individual's purpose for compiling it.

<div align="right">(Zubizaretta, 1994, pg 324)</div>

Regardless of the focus the portfolio must be brought back to the students. From determining the effect of the data on the progress of the students new goals can be established. This cycle blends accountability and professional development together.

The Need For a Variety of Content

Including a variety of content provides a solid source of information on measuring the attainment of goals. It also allows for the display of a teacher's uniqueness or individuality in personality and teaching style.

When focussing on a goal, such as demonstrating interaction with students, a teacher may want to include a variety of audio/visuals. A classroom floor plan, video taped lessons, audiotapes of student/teacher interaction, photographs are but a few examples. For a particular strategy lesson plans, unit plans, student work, computer discs, resource lists, examinations, and a rationale and assessment of the strategy may be included. One teacher from Smalltown commented on how much better she felt about talking about a strategy or philosophy than writing it down on paper. For her, a videotaped portfolio (or portion of a portfolio) may have been appropriate. Comments/evaluations from parents, community members, peers, and/or administrators add a broader perspective that can give validity and reliability to the portfolio.

Including a personal statement of belief or philosophy may allow the evaluator to better understand the teacher. It may also help to include pertinent outside interests and brief career history. Descriptions of environment (community as well as the makeup of the class) and teaching style may also broaden the impact of the data

presented.

The choice of content within a portfolio can tell the evaluator a great deal about the teacher. Portfolios have the potential to reveal a lot about their creators. (Paulson, et. al., 1991 pg 61). The article, <u>What Makes a Portfolio a Portfolio</u>? also contains a quote from the Pacific Northwest College of Art about the importance of variety and choice within a portfolio. While this quote refers to pieces of art, the same sentiments apply when choosing artifacts that represent the 'art' of teaching.

> An application portfolio is a visual representation of who you are . . . your history as well as what you are currently doing . . . It is representing you when you are not present . . part of the evaluation of a portfolio is based on the personal choices [you] make when picking pieces for the portfolio. It tells the school something about [your] current values, that's why you will rarely get a school to be very specific about what they look for in a portfolio. [You] should not be afraid to make choices.   (Paulson, et. al, 1990 pg 61)

The Need for Critical Analysis of Content

The teachers of the Smalltown Project had trouble deciding whether to make their portfolio a showcase of best performance ("a brag book" was the term commonly used) or to include some negative aspects of their teaching practices as well. Most indicated that they tried to represent the "truth", to provide a balance of both the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching.

The reason for this total inclusion was because they felt good evaluation should not only focus on the positive but also on areas that needed some attention. They explained that good evaluation provided a <u>critical analysis</u> of teacher practices, critical

in the sense of critiquing and not criticizing.

Since, in essence, these teachers were acting as their own evaluators they felt the need to present the "whole" picture of their teaching as best they could. Several participants indicated when they are interested in a particular concept or strategy they develop "tunnel vision" and fail to see any flaws in application. The superintendent also referred to this phenomenon and indicated that there was a need to have an outside perspective to alleviate this narrow focus, especially in the case of marginal teachers. The teachers, too, stated that they felt an <u>outside observer</u> could point out inconsistencies within their practice, finding differences between the <u>stated</u> belief and the actual <u>implementation</u> of the belief. An outside observer can also capture the teacher's interaction with the children in a way that no artifact contained within a portfolio can. In spite of their attempts to provide the broader picture of their teaching, the teachers of Smalltown Elementary felt a certain degree of frustration and uneasiness in having the portfolio used as the only measure of their teaching abilities without the inclusion of an outsider observation. To resolve this issue they included <u>reflective comments</u>, not only from themselves but also from peers, students, parents and administrators in order to present as broad a view of their teaching as possible.

Shulman (1987) and Collins (1990) would concur with including reflective, self evaluative comments. Collins recommends that teachers include a justification for any included lesson and unit plans as well as reflections about their success or failure with suggestions for future adjustments. He rates reflections into two categories.

Descriptive - Reflections that describe and are a mere recounting of events.

Reasoned - Reflections that provide reasons or patterns and show the teacher's ability to see patterns in one's own teaching.

While there may be a strong correlation between the ability to reflect and the quality of teaching not every evaluator or teacher would feel comfortable with this element being used as the only measuring of teaching abilities. Wolf (1988), for one, cautions against the use of reflective comments as a evaluative measure of competent or incompetent teachers.

> Despite our requests for reflection and articulation of rationales, we will likely face a key problem in the documentation process: teachers rarely have opportunities to reflect on and to articulate what they do. Thus, while we have built into the documentation process opportunities and tools for reflection on and articulation of instructional decisions, we will likely find talented teachers unaccustomed to such articulation and unprepared to make explicit the tacit knowledge that drives their teaching. Likewise, we might find teachers whose abilities to argue reasons for choices exceed their abilities to help students learn.   (Wolf, 1988, pg 3)

The superintendent of the Smalltown Project supported this concern when he stated "while all good teachers are reflective, not all reflective teachers are good".

For a true critical analysis of the contents, reflective comments need to be included from both the teacher as well as outside observers, including peers and administrators. Incorporating goal statements and analysis of these goals would also provide for a more critical perspective of a teacher's practice.

The Need for Time

All the "needs" need time. Evaluators who wish teachers to put together

portfolios for the blended purposes of professional development and accountability must allow or provide time for teachers to:

- meet and discuss

- gather data

- observe each other

- have a final conference

If the process is considered a "one time deal", as it was for the teachers in Smalltown, then the task of putting together a professional portfolio seems insurmountable. If, however, the portfolio is considered to be part of an <u>ongoing</u> career long <u>process</u> of goal-setting, documentation, and reflection then the task becomes manageable. To facilitate such a process requires a radical change in teacher evaluation practices.

CHAPTER SEVEN
A FINAL APPRAISAL OF THE USE OF PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIOS FOR TEACHER ASSESSMENT

The results of my study on professional portfolio use for teacher evaluation indicate that adding self reflection and criteria selection alone do not make the experience more effective. The tension between accountability and professional development still existed and was not diminished through a change in procedure.

In part one I outlined that this tension manifested out of different interpretations of the terms; resulting in different motives on the part of the evaluator and evaluatee. (It is questionable as to which occurs first - the interpretation then the motive or the motive and then the interpretation.) Regardless of order, the result is the same -- a lack of trust in the process on the part of both groups. A we/they syndrome is produced. (McLaughlin 1990) Professional portfolios did not counteract the we/they mentality for the participants. If anything, they intensified the problem because of a lack of set criteria and a lack of direct interaction with the evaluator.

The motives for evaluation did not change for either the participants or the superintendent, despite Pat's intentions otherwise. She even changed terminology in an attempt to alter attitudes, using the word assessment rather than evaluation. The results, however, were the same. While the verbalized intent of evaluation is to focus on the positive, the actual practices do not produce positive results. While the intent of the portfolio project was to have the teachers recognize their own strengths, most of them still did not feel positive after their efforts.

Teachers in the Smalltown Study felt they were left "hanging" with the portfolio method of evaluation because they did not receive critical feedback from the

superintendent. They had become dependent on a top-down format of evaluation and one limited experience with portfolios did not change that.

Two Views of Teaching

A hierarchal form of evaluation derives in part from the belief that teaching is a task that can be broken up into identifiable, examinable, and measurable components. These components then can be rated on a scale ranging from good to bad; poor to excellent. The organization is hierarchal and rigid with the teacher expected to be the 'master' of knowledge. The focus of this view of teaching is on producing appropriate outcomes. The role of evaluation is to ensure teachers conform and comply to a level of minimal competence. The role of the evaluator is to control, direct, manage and supervise. This outside control format requires little input from teachers and, subsequently, less involvement from them in the process.

Pat, on the other hand, operated from a different belief about teaching. This view treats teaching as an art form incorporating learned skills, professional judgment and intuition. It demands more from a teacher than minimal competence. It expects professional excellence. The organization has a flatter profile with the teacher being a 'facilitator' of knowledge. The focus is on the process as well as the product. The main purpose of evaluation is to promote expertise. There is more professional autonomy and self-governance for teachers. There may or may not be an outside evaluator. Mentors provide encouragement and guidance. Peers provide support and insight. Self-reflection is a key component to the evaluation process. A great deal of input is expected from the teacher as the onus of assessment lies with the teacher, not the evaluator.
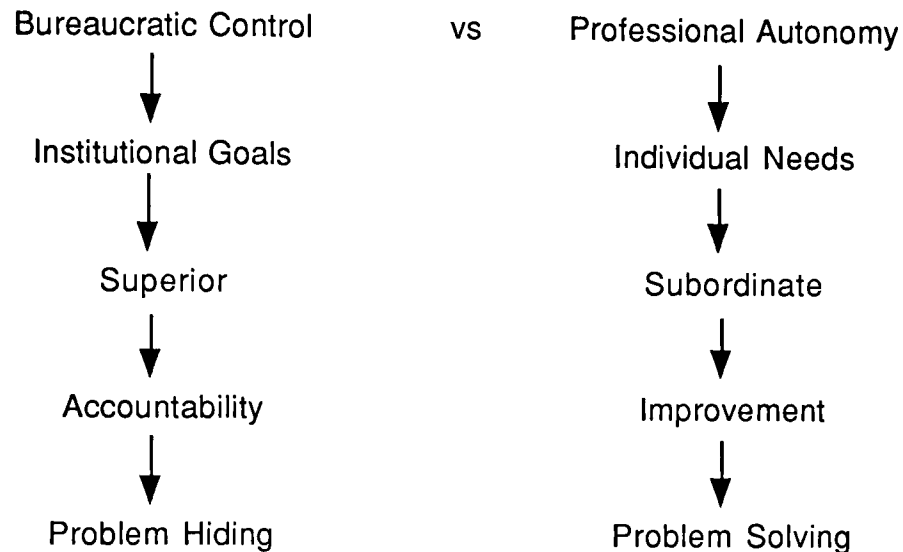
A comparison of the two views of teaching is presented in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Views of Teaching

Belief	I	II
Categorization	Labor/Craft	Profession/Art
Job Description	A combination of concrete skills, specialized technique and generalized rules produce a desired outcome.	A repertoire of specialized skills, theoretical knowledge combined with a novel, unconventional, unpredictable form and use of technique which is personalized, intuition, creativity, improvisation is expressed in the form of professional judgment.
Role of Evaluator	Supervisor/Manager	Administrator, Leader, Encourager
Role of Teacher	To conform and comply as a passive participant.	An active participant expected to take a leadership role in demonstrating competence.
Type of Evaluator	Direct and indirect inspection of general performance standards	Peer assessment and self study of "holistic" qualities and discovery of teaching patterns.
Acceptable Standards of Evaluation	Minimum competence	Professional excellence.

Milbrey McLaughlin (1990) termed the first view of teaching as bureaucratic control and the second as professional autonomy. She states that bureaucratic control leads to problem hiding while professional autonomy leads to problem solving. A synopsis of her findings are displayed in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: The Two View of Evaluation as Described by
Milbrey McLaughlin (1990)

Bureaucratic Control	vs	Professional Autonomy
↓		↓
Institutional Goals		Individual Needs
↓		↓
Superior		Subordinate
↓		↓
Accountability		Improvement
↓		↓
Problem Hiding		Problem Solving

These two points of view created a dilemma for the teachers in Smalltown Elementary as they developed their portfolios. They tried to accommodate both views of teaching because in reality, elements of both exist in every school system.

Most policies on the evaluation of teacher performance are based on the first belief about teaching and try to break the job into measurable components. Teachers, on the other hand, live the second belief. Researchers such as Linda Darling-Hammond (1990) and the Alberta provincial study (1993) encourage districts to examine their policies for incongruencies between the intent and actual practices to alleviate some of this stress for teachers.

A Change in Policy

Inherent in evaluation policies and practices based on minimum competence is the assumption that teachers may not perform up to the standards if they are not monitored. Pat, however, initiated the use of portfolios because she **valued** the expertise of her teachers and wanted them to value themselves and demonstrate their competence. Research supports this paradigm shift. The Alberta Study (1993) states:

> Instead, policies which are based on an assumption of
> teacher competence would do much to make evaluation a
> positive process.   (pg 301)

When value is placed on teachers and their judgment, then the assumption of professional competence can be the basis of evaluation policies. Not only would the assumption that teachers are competent professionals make the evaluation experience more positive it would probably facilitate the process of goal setting. (Strike, 1990)

The teachers in Smalltown did not include goals in their portfolios. It was never mentioned as an item of consideration although Pat has hoped it would be a natural result of the reflection on their teaching. While these teachers had mastered how to measure whether the outcome met the objective to determine student progress, they had not mastered the same concept in measuring their own progress as professionals. The Alberta Survey reported:
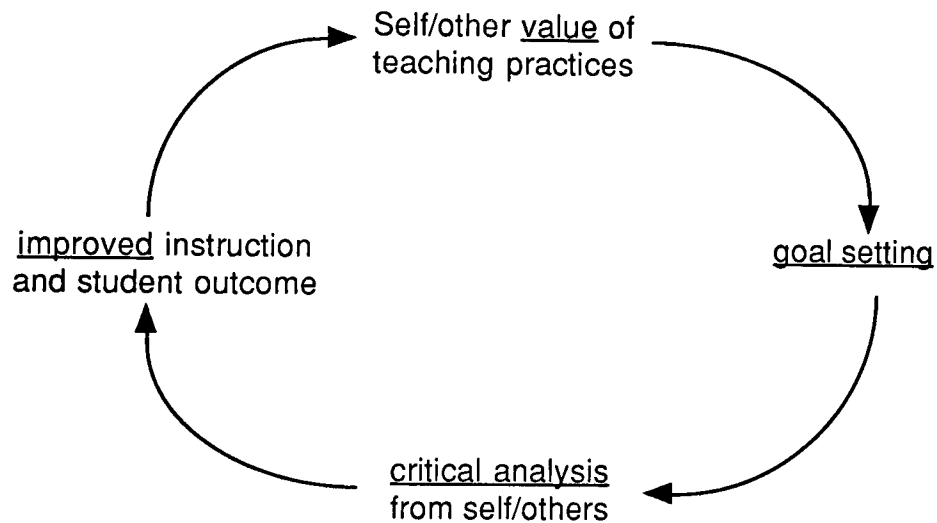
> In those jurisdictions which encouraged goal-setting,
> teachers, through the documentation of the attainment of
> specific goals and the information they had gathered about
> the growth of their students, were able to confirm that they

were better teachers.

(Alberta Education Survey, 1993, pg 294)

Confirmation of competence will then lead to an increase in a sense of value. The resulting cycle can be portrayed in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: The Process of Appraising Teachers Based on a Policy of Positive Assumptions

Self/other <u>value</u> of
teaching practices

<u>goal setting</u>

<u>critical analysis</u>
from self/others

<u>improved</u> instruction
and student outcome

A Change in Roles

The model depicted above would change the roles of the evaluator and the teacher. The teacher would become the initiator of the process and the administrator would become more a facilitator and mentor. Kenneth A. Strike refers to this shift as a move away from a control mentality to one of service.

> A move from bureaucratic democracy to professionalism requires that the administration in education must be reconceptualized away from a control function and toward a service function.   (Kenneth A. Strike, 1990, pg 362)

If the role of the administrator were to become more of a "service function", then there is more chance that the process of evaluation would become a vehicle of communication between administrator and teacher about the professional growth of the latter. The focus of this two way communication would be on the goals set by the teacher and subsequent reflection upon those goals. Goal setting and self-reflection would become part of a "service" oriented assessment process.

A service model is more process oriented than product focussed. It indicates a continuous teacher/learning cycle rather than a once in three year rotation system. It also incorporates the role of teacher as researcher in action which was probably Pat's intent in her desire to have each teacher on her staff take on a "leadership" role. Becoming researchers in action not only empowers teachers to take more autonomy in their own professional development, it empowers them to have ownership over their own accountability. When this model is incorporated into the evaluation/appraisal process, and where accountability and professional development become intertwined and inseparable from each other, true professionalism can occur.

A Change in the Structure of the Educational System

Teacher Professionalism and School Restructuring - A Move to a School Based Model

Allan Colburn (1993) states that as society changes from an industrial base to a service and information base the environment that supports the development of

knowledge based, inquiry based professional practice is also one which enhances student learning. (Levin, 1988, pg 4) Colburn goes on to explain that this environment in education is best fostered at the school level rather than dictated from a centrally controlled agenda.

Other research on teacher evaluation, from the Alberta provincial study (1993) to the Wise Study (1984), shows that appraisal of teacher performance becomes most meaningful when it is tied in with school goals. Linda Darling-Hammond (1990) states that individual evaluation and organizational renewal are increasingly intertwined. Edward F. Iwanicki (1993) explains that designs for school improvement and teacher appraisal practice for professional development fit together as complementary processes when the process includes the act of goal setting and goal evaluation. He states that in goal setting models, school improvement is part of the professional growth structure and, hence, becomes part of the teacher appraisal process. The processes of school improvement and appraisal of teacher performance become integrated as one. Iwanicki still incorporates a rotational form of appraisal but unlike traditional forms of evaluation the process is a continuous cycle and controlled by the teacher.

Year One - Appraisal Report

Year Two - Progress Report on Objectives

Year Three - Final Evaluation Report

These evaluation reports are compiled into a portfolio which is included in the teacher's personnel file. Such a portfolio provides a richer perspective on a teacher's performance and accomplishments with respect to professional growth and/or school improvement objectives than the more traditional yearly evaluation reports.

(Iwanicki, 1993, pg 168)

Iwanicki concludes that the true goal of effective evaluation is to enhance the student

learning experience in schools and this can be achieved through goal setting and

resource evaluation of teacher performance within the context of school improvement

and restructuring. Such a model shifts the education structure away from the

hierarchal, highly centralized (bureaucratic) approach towards a site-based

(professional) approach. Researchers from the Rand Institute explain:

> The professional approach relies on people and
> judgments. It places more weight on the development of
> client-responsive practices than on the definition of
> standardized practice. It weeds out those unable or
> unwilling to develop competence, rather than controlling
> their damage by prescriptions for performance. It assumes
> that others will become more capable by engaging in the
> joint construction of goals, definition of standards of good
> practice, mutual criticism, and commitment to ongoing
> inquiry. It supposes that investing in staff development,
> career incentives, and evaluation, i.e., in teachers
> themselves, will improve the quality of teaching.
> The bureaucratic approach has heavy costs; the time
> has come to try the professional approach to evaluation.
> (Wise, et. al., 1984, pg 80)

As school systems move from a centralized approach to a school-based one the

focus for appraising teacher performance becomes the individual and not the system.

The portfolio can become an integral, if not a focal part of the process. It can provide

teachers with a structure through which they can

> "engage in the joint construction of goals, definitions of
> standards of good practice, mutual criticism and
> commitment to ongoing inquiry". (Wise, et. al, 1984, pg 80)

When portfolios are incorporated into such a model the product may vary from

individual to individual: from school to school yet their differences can be their strength and not their weakness. As one participant of the Smalltown study explained "cloning is the weakness of any system". It is the diversity in a strategy that gives it strength. The strength of using portfolios in appraising teacher performances will be in their variety of and not in their sameness. The emphasis will be on the process of putting together the portfolio. Through developing a *definition*, individuals, group of teachers or the whole school will dialogue together about the *audience, focus* and *content.* Their *relationships* with peers, school and central office administrators, college instructors and university professors will shift as a result. Evaluators will take on more of a monitoring and less of a controlling role. These individuals will provide support and guidance in the *critical analysis* of teachers' performances. As teachers are assisted to reflect on their own practices and set goals for continued growth, accountability for professional development will be ensured. Through allotted amounts of *time*, teachers and schools can come together to share research. Thus, the appraisal of teacher performance through the process of portfolio development can become part of a system's professional development plan. In this "jazz band" model, teachers in districts and regions can be linked through their professional goals which have become embodied in their own action research. (An example of such links are depicted in Figure 7.3 on page 99.)

The possibilities provided by such a structure could be endless. There will be much variety, and from that, hopefully more strength for the professionalization of teachers. As teachers learn to measure their own growth by measuring student growth there will also be an increase in student learning. It will perhaps provide a better model in which school systems can begin to achieve their mission statement goals such as School District No. 51's where students are encouraged to become creative

problem solvers and life-long learners. Students will be able to follow the example of their teachers who are engaged in such practices and both will be better prepared to contribute to a global community where constant change, increased technology and diversity will be the norm rather than the exception.

Professional portfolios might be one medium of the present that will help us enter the future.

Figure 7.3: The Use of Portfolios to Link School Improvement and Teacher Appraisal Through Action Research
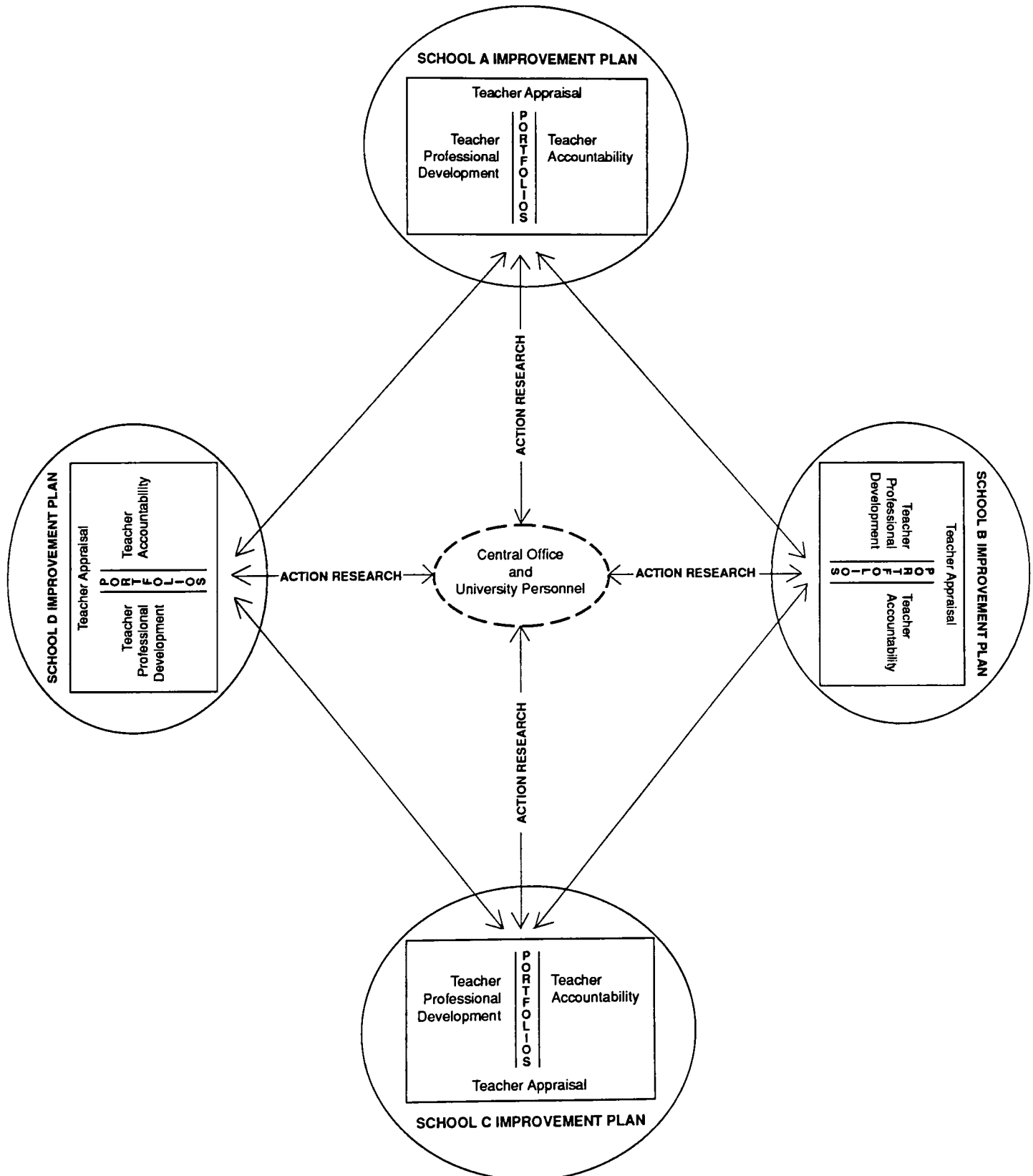
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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Participating Teachers)

Qualifier: You may abstain from answering any question you wish.

1. Briefly explain your philosophy of teaching, that is your teaching style.
   Briefly explain your philosophy of learning, that is your learning style.

2. Explain the relationship you feel that you have with your administrator.

3. What do you feel is the purpose of teacher evaluation?

4. What do you feel your role is in the teacher evaluation process?

5. Do you feel your district's policy procedures allow you to fulfil that role?
   Why or Why not?

6. Why do you think your administrator decided to have teachers on your staff compile a portfolio as part of their evaluation?

7. What do you think she hoped to accomplish by asking you to make a portfolio?

8. What do you think you will/did accomplish by compiling a portfolio?

9. What were some of the successes in making a portfolio for your evaluation?
   What were some of the problems in compiling a portfolio for evaluation?
   Were there any surprises in pulling together a portfolio for evaluation?
   (This question is for the teachers who have already gone through the process.)

10. Explain what you put into your portfolio.

11. Would you choose different material to put into your portfolio next time?
    Why or why not?

12. How did you choose what to include? exclude?

13. What did you hope that the contents of the portfolio would say about you as a teacher? a person?

14. What sort of questions or thoughts went through your mind as you collected the data for your portfolio, knowing that it would be used to judge you as a teacher.

15. Would you recommend this strategy for every teacher? Why or why not?

16. Would you recommend this strategy for every principal? Why or why not?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS   (School Principal and Administrator)

Qualifier: You may abstain from answering any question you wish.

1. Briefly explain your philosophy of teaching.
   Briefly explain your philosophy of learning.

2. Explain your administration style

3. Explain the relationship you feel that you have with your staff.

4. What do you feel is the purpose of teacher evaluation?

5. What do you feel your role is in the teacher evaluation process?

6. Do you feel your district's policy procedures allow you to fulfil that role?
   Why or Why not?

7. Why did you decide to have teachers on your staff compile a portfolio as part of their evaluation?

8. What did you hope to accomplish by asking teachers to make a portfolio?

9. What do you hope teachers will accomplish by compiling a portfolio?

10. What were some of the successes in having teachers make a portfolio for their evaluation?
    What were some of the problems in using portfolios for evaluation teachers?
    Were there any surprises in using a portfolio for evaluation?

11. Explain what teaches put into their portfolios.

12. Could teachers justify the contents of their portfolios to your satisfaction?
    Why or Why not?

13. Do you feel the contents of the teachers' portfolios demonstrated the competencies of their teaching?

14. What did the contents of the teachers' portfolios tell you about that individual as a teacher? as a person?

15. Would you recommend this strategy for every teacher? Why or Why not?

16. Would you recommend this strategy for every principal? Why or Why not?

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer as many of the following questions as you wish. Be as brief and as honest as possible.

1. How many years have you taught? _____

2. In what type of locale have you taught?

example: Rural or Urban, Northern or Southern Alberta, out of Alberta, out of country, etc.

Please indicate how many years you spent in each area.

<u>Locale</u>	<u>Years Spent</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. What grade levels have you taught? _____

4. What is your favorite grade level? _____

Why is it your favorite?

_____

_____

5. If you changed grade levels, please indicate why.

_____

_____

_____

6. What was your subject major upon completing your undergraduate degree? _____

7. Why did you choose that major?

_____

_____

_____

8. Would you choose the same major if you were entering education today? _____

Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

9. Why did you choose education/teaching as a career?

_____

_____

_____

10. If you had your chance to change the past would you choose education again? _____

    Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

11. Choose 5 words that would describe what type of student teacher you were.

          _____

          _____

          _____

          _____

          _____

12. Choose 5 words that describe what kind of teacher you are today.

          _____

          _____

          _____

          _____

          _____

13. If finances and job opportunities were not an issue, would you continue with education as a career until retirement? _____

Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

14. What are your career goals or aspirations, either within education or without?

_____

_____

_____

15. Check the types of professional development activities you engaged in this school year.

_____ peer consultation

_____ district inservice

_____ university course

_____ conferences

_____ reading professional literature

_____ action research (initiating a new idea or strategy)

_____ administrative guidance

_____ other (please list) _____

_____

_____

16. Describe some of your past experience with formal evaluation practises of your teaching. Please describe how you felt about the process and what you learned from it. Also indicate how often your teaching has been formally evaluated.

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Evaluation Form #1

SECTION 2
OBSERVATION SCALES

1. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CLASSROOM OBJECTIVES (1)

The Teacher:

A. Informs the class of predetermined objectives and procedures for their attainment

B. Develops objectives consistent with course content; involves students in clarifying objectives and in planning for their attainment ·

C. Clarifies, through discussion, predetermined objectives and plans for their attainment

D. Directs classroom activities without making objectives or plans for their attainment known to the students

E. Develops objectives based upon course content; encourages class to share in the planning for their attainment

2. VARIETY IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES (1)

The Teacher:

A. Uses little or no variety in instructional activities

B. Provides a limited variety of instructional activities involving some students

C. Shows evidence of a wide variety of instructional activities consistent with the goals and objectives for all ·' _ ...

D. Provides a limited variety of instructional activities involving most students

E. Provides a variety of appropriate instructional activities involving most students

3. USE OF MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTION (1)

The Teacher:

A. Makes effective use of a wide variety of instructional materials related to the learning activities and objectives

B. Makes little or no use of instructional materials

C. Makes limited use of readily available instructional materials

D. Makes good use of a variety of appropriate instructional materials

E. Makes good use of common instructional materials

4. LEARNING/INTEREST CENTERS* (1)

The Teacher:

A. Provides a learning center unrelated to observed learning activities

B. Involves students in planning and arranging stimulating learning centers related to observed learning activities

C. Provides learning centers indirectly related to observed learning activities

D. Provides learning centers which are related to observed learning activities

E. Provides no learning centers

*Note: For workshop purposes "Learning/Interest Centers" is defined as an instructional configuration within the classroom which attracts individuals and/or groups of students and stimulates and provides self-instructional learning.

5. CLASSROOM CONTROL (1)

The Teacher:

A. Provides an atmosphere in which industrious self-regulation is generally maintained

B. Imposes authority rigorously which is frequently circumvented or ignored

C. Establishes standards of conduct that are generally maintained .

D. Intervenes frequently to maintain control

E. Encourages self-directed standards of conduct that are maintained with occasional . lapses

6. INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION (1)

The Teacher:

A. Provides the same learning experiences for all the class

B. Provides some differentiated learning experiences for small groups

C. Arranges differentiated learning experiences to meet the needs and abilities of most individual students

D. Recognizes and deals with each student according to his/her needs, aptitude, talents and learning style

E. Arranges for differentiated small-group learning experiences with some attention to individuals

7. LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (2)

The Teacher:

A. Provides limited help for obvious learning difficulties

B. Provides little or no help for obvious learning difficulties

C. Provides group instruction for identified learning difficulties

D. Assists individuals and groups to resolve learning difficulties

E. Provides individual and group instruction for most cases of learning difficulties

8. OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPATION (1) _ verbal dimension

, The Teacher:

A. Encourages students to participate in discussion and/or other activities

B. Lectures a large part of the time; does not involve students

C. Elicits student responses in teacher-led discussions and activities; permits some student participation

D. Provides abundant and varied opportunities for individual and group expression in discussion and other activities

E. Dominates classroom activities; students respond only when called upon.

TEACHER REACTION TO STUDENT RESPONSE (2)   *verbally oriented.*
Thinking Skills

The Teacher:

A. Permits some student response; discourages input

praise
put downs.

B. Permits limited student response; criticizes student input

C. Encourages student response; utilizes some student input in the class session

D. Encourages student response; utilizes and extends student input to enhance learning

E. Provides some opportunity for student response; accepts student input

CREATIVE EXPRESSION (1)

The Teacher:

A. Permits little or no opportunity for creative expression

B. Provides activities which challenge and encourage both individual and group creativity

C. Utilizes creative activities for some students

D. Allows limited opportunity for creative expression

E. Provides activities which encourage creative expression

11. DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT INITIATIVE (1, 3)

The Teacher:

A. Provides a variety of classroom activities to develop student initiative

B. Permits students to exercise initiative in a limited number of activities

C. Utilizes activities to encourage and develop student initiative in a wide variety of ways

D. Allows little or no opportunity for student initiative

E. Provides some opportunities for developing student initiative

12. SOCIAL CLIMATE (1)

The Teacher:

A. Demonstrates limited effort to enhance student relationships

B. Develops positive student relationships which prevail with few exceptions

C. Makes no effort to enhance student relationships

D. Encourages a spirit of cooperation among students

E. Provides an environment which results in cooperation and mutual respect among all students

ASSESSING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT/COMPREHENSION DURING THE LESSON (1,2)

The Teacher:

A. Assesses student achievement/comprehension periodically.

B. Assesses student achievement/comprehension incidentally.

C. Employs a variety of ways to assess achievement/comprehension regularly.

D. Makes no attempt to assess student achievement/comprehension.

E. Assesses student achievement/comprehension regularly.

equipment

14. CURRENT APPLICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (1,3)

The Teacher:

A. Evidences skill in relating subject matter to the students' application of it by providing opportunities for utilization

B. Relates subject matter to the student's application of it as enrichment in some areas

C. Indicates how current application of subject matter may be made, but provides limited opportunities for utilization

D. Stresses subject matter overlooking most possibilities of application for current utilization

E. Makes no connection between subject matter and the student's application of it

Evaluation Form #2

CLASSROOM VISITATION REPORT

Teacher:_____   School:_____

Experience:
        With County of Warner No.5:   _____ years
        With Other Systems in Alberta: _____ years
                    Outside Alberta: _____ years

Grade(s)/Subjects Taught:_____

Visitation Data:
        Date:_____   Time: From_____ to_____
        Visit No._____ in current school year

Lesson(s) Observed: 1._____ 2._____ 3._____ 4._____

EVALUATION: Check Appropriate Response	Excellent	Good	Improvable Area	Not Observed	EVALUATOR COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS
1. PLANNING a) Daily Lessons Plans b) Long and Short Range Plans c) Use of Appropriate Program of Studies and Curriculum Guides d) Resource Acquisition					
2. LESSON PRESENTATION a) Methodology b) Coverage of Prescribed Content c) Balance of Activities, Pacing d) Questioning e) Introduction and Closure f) Knowledge of Content g) Instructional Aids					
3. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT a) Noise Level b) Student-Teacher Interaction c) Patience, Courtesy, Tact d) Identification and Accommodation of Student Difficulties e) Individual Assistance and Guidance f) Motivation of Students to Learn: to Develop Positive Self-Images					
4. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT a) Discipline b) Handling of Routines c) Room Appearance/Organization d) Room Environment/Displays/Decorations					

EVALUATION: Check Appropriate Response	Excellent	Good	Improvable Area	Not Observed	EVALUATOR COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS
5. STUDENT EVALUATION a) Frequency b) Quality c) Methods of Evaluation d) Recordkeeping					
6. PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL a) Attitude, Enthusiasm b) Command of English, Voice Quality c) Response to Supervision d) Appearance and Mannerism e) Relationship with Students, Teachers, Parents, Other f) Punctuality					
7. OUT-OF-CLASS RESPONSIBILITIES a) Supervision Duties b) School Activities (Non-Classroom, Extra-Curricular) c) Contribution to the Overall School "Environment"					

Teacher Comments/Reactions: _____

_____

_____

_____

Date: _____   Teacher's Signature: _____

The perceptions gained by the undersigned during the above-noted visit(s) were discussed with _____

on _____; this report is a summary of that discussion.

_____   Date:_____

(Evaluator's Signature)

_____

I hereby signify that I have received and read this report.

                                         Date: _____

_____

(Teacher's Signature)