

THE USE OF TEACHER PORTFOLIOS
IN TEACHER EVALUATION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**THE USE OF TEACHER PORTFOLIOS
IN TEACHER EVALUATION**

BY

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**An Internship report submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education**

Faculty of Education

Memorial University of Newfoundland

May 1997

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ABSTRACT

This internship reports findings on the use of portfolios in the formative evaluation of teachers. Three teachers used portfolios as a means of understanding their own teaching and as a basis of communication with the school principal. The teachers found the use of portfolios empowering and of limited value. The principal viewed the portfolios as a valuable tool in communicating with the teachers about evaluation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with much appreciation and gratitude that I acknowledge those who supported, encouraged and helped me during my studies in the Master of Education Leadership program. The support of my family, friends, colleagues and faculty members was an immense help during my entire program.

I am grateful to have had the leadership and advice of Dr. Alice Collins as my internship faculty supervisor. I thank her for her time and support and her helpful comments, direction and advice given me during the completion of this internship report. I also thank Dr. Patricia Canning for her support, and I acknowledge the expertise and assistance of the Education Faculty during my entire program.

I wish to thank the teachers for their participation. Their dedication, experience and skills were essential to the success of this study.

To the Principal, I extend much thanks for continued support and guidance, for listening and sharing ideas and proofreading and offering constructive feedback when requested. I also extend thanks to other educators and friends for sharing their knowledge and educational expertise.

To close, I wish to thank my husband, Charles Kearley, for his ongoing support, his patience and understanding, words of advice and encouragement throughout my program. Thank you!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Internship

The Master of Education program at Memorial University of Newfoundland requires the creation and submission of either a thesis, project, paper folio or internship report as partial fulfilment of the degree program. This candidate chose to pursue the internship as the completion requirement for the Master of Education Leadership degree.

All those involved in education recognize the importance of the evaluation of teachers and the professional responsibility required to complete it effectively. A successful evaluation process should promote competency within the teaching profession and should assist in the professional development of teachers. Educators have come to realize that there is need for revision and modification of the current evaluation

procedures for they do not always achieve these goals. It has been suggested that "as new understandings of organizations alter traditional concepts of how best to motivate employees, teacher evaluation practices grounded in a tradition of hierarchical control need to be examined" (Bryant and Currin, 1995, p. 250). Administrators and teachers need to rethink the limits of current teacher evaluation processes. All participants in a formative evaluation need to recognize the goal of formative evaluation is to help teachers develop individual skills, discover new techniques and enhance their present ways of teaching.

"The emphasis on alternative assessments parallels the paradigm shifts in our conceptions of teaching and learning" (Fisher, 1994, p. 20), therefore there is a need to explore what options are available to change present practice in teacher evaluation. It is hoped that this study will provide a basis for consideration of an alternate means of evaluation that will enhance and improve the quality of teachers performance and professional growth.

Goals and Objectives for the Internship

The purpose of this internship was to explore alternate means of formative evaluation. Given the generally negative opinions which teachers have of evaluation, this internship ought to determine how three teachers and a principal would respond to the use of portfolios in formative evaluation.

This internship employed a collaborative action research methodology which followed Glickman's (1990) four phases. The first phase was goal identification. This phase identified and collected information that determined the goals and objectives worthy of instructional improvement. The second phase was the treatment or planning phase. This phase resulted in an action plan that identified the activities to be performed, time lines, resources and data collected. The third phase was the evaluation phase. Data were collected, assessed and interpreted in light of the previously stated goals and objectives. The fourth phase restated and modified original goals. The restating and modifying of the original goals, objectives and activities were based on the outcomes of the research results.

An integral part of this action research was the development of teacher portfolios for the collection and organization of data with respect to the investigation and outcomes of existing evaluation processes. Teachers need an on-going process of evaluation that utilizes various avenues of feedback and communication between the administrator and the teacher. "A teacher portfolio permits immediate feedback and allows for the process of evaluation to be continuous" (Perkins and Gelfer, 1993, p. 235). Furthermore, "portfolios can help strengthen a faculty member's overall organization, demonstrate progress and innovative work, and provide information that helps improve performance and the quality of the overall program" (Perkins and Gelfer, 1993, p. 235).

Teachers and administrators need to have the courage to develop evaluation methods which are satisfactory to all involved. Administrators need to accept the fact that most teachers are highly trained and committed to quality education. Teachers must also realize even within their level of expertise there is room for improvement. Teacher evaluation can become a

positive experience when the process is continuous rather than occasional and when the results are directed towards the professional development and growth of teachers. According to a review committee of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (1995), there are two important concepts in evaluation: (1) school boards and teachers must work collaboratively, and (2) all personnel involved have a responsibility towards constant improvement of the teaching profession. Glickman (1990) reaffirms this approach strongly; "I believe teachers will become collectively purposeful as they gain control over decisions for instructional improvement" (p. 93). The knowledge base and competencies of teachers need updating and review in content areas and teaching skills. Therefore, professional growth must be an ongoing process for teachers. The present negative reactions exhibited by teachers toward evaluation must be replaced by affirmative views if the goal of formative evaluation is to be achieved. The goal of this study was to provide an opportunity, through the use of portfolios, to inquire into teacher and principal satisfaction on the use of portfolios as an alternate method of formative evaluation.

Internship Design and Setting

This internship employed the case study, an "approach [which] is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale" (Bell, 1993, p. 8). During a case study, evidence is systematically collected, variable relationships are studied and the design of the study is planned. Through the methods of observation and interviews all appropriate information and data are collected. Furthermore, Bell (1993) identifies that "the great strength of the case study method is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify, the various interactive processes at work " (p. 8). During the course of the case study the researcher's goal is to identify organizational features and demonstrate how they influence and affect the implementation of systems on the functions of that organization.

This case study was based on the methodological principles of ethnography and action research. "Educational ethnography has been used

to describe settings and contexts, to generate theory, and to evaluate educational programs” (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p. 8). It is one approach to the study of problems and processes in education. As stated by LeCompte and Preissle (1993), “a distinguishing characteristic of qualitative and ethnographic research design is that it facilitates a fluid and developmental process of investigation” (p. 30). Ethnographic research, also known as case study or field research, is qualitative multi-method research. Ethnography is predicated upon the researcher’s active participation and immersion in the research process, and aims for intersubjective understandings between the researcher and the participants involved in the study. Woods (1986) believes that ethnography is concerned with uncovering what people believe, how they behave and interact together. According to Wiersma (1991), “ethnographic research relies heavily on observation, description and qualitative judgments in interpretations of whatever phenomena are being studied” (p. 17).

Using Glickman’s (1990) understanding that “action research in

education is a study conducted by colleagues in a school setting of the results of their activities to improve instruction" (p. 393), this internship also employed the principles of action research methodology. Based on the assumption that those investigating the research should also be involved in the research and the connection of research to action, this internship satisfies both principles. "Thus, action researchers study problems that grow out of the community, work within a group to determine actions to be taken, and evaluate the effect of these actions within the community setting" (Calhoun, 1994, p.16).

Corey (1953) believed that educators would make decisions and implement effective practices if action research were conducted as part of their decision-making process. Their results would then be used as a guide for modification or selection of various practices.

We are convinced that the disposition to study, as objectively as possible, the consequences of our own teaching is more likely to change and improve our practices than is reading about what someone else has discovered regarding the consequences of his teaching (Corey, 1953, p. 20).

Calhoun (1994) noted "the value of action research for Corey was determined by the extent to which findings lead to improvement in the practices of the people engaged in the research" (p. 17).

This case study involved four phases over a period of three months. Documentation was multi-dimensional. I collected field notes during planning meetings and classroom observations. Through the use of semi-structured interviews with the teachers and the principal, I attempted to investigate the views and reflections of these individuals regarding the use of teacher portfolios in teacher evaluation. I also conducted focus group sessions and attended classroom observations conducted by the principal who was gathering data on the effect of teacher portfolios in teacher evaluation. The scope of these sessions was to identify the materials teachers had submitted in their portfolios as well as to examine their written reflections.

This form of participant observation and document analysis enabled me to share in the experiences of the teacher participants and to understand their

actions and written reflections. I was accepted by the teachers and included in group discussions and individual interviews recognizing problems and finding possible solutions. As an ethnographic researcher I was able to examine educational phenomena more completely as a result of being directly involved in the research. In the context of education, ethnographic research can be defined “as the process of providing scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes and phenomena within their specific contexts” (Wiersma, 1991, p. 17).

The sample population for this study consisted of three teachers and the principal of an urban primary/elementary school. The school’s student population numbered four hundred and two (402), with twenty two (22) teaching staff and five (5) support staff. The school is located in a residential area with a population of approximately twenty-six thousand (26,000). The socioeconomic status of the families in this school is considered low to middle income. The school is involved in the community as a support group for service and youth organizations. The school also has an active school

council, parent-teacher association and parent and community volunteers. The majority of staff members are actively involved in decision-making processes with regard to curriculum, technology, discipline, social and other educational issues. The staff is also cognizant of the present education reform movement and is preparing for site-based management. The school is under the jurisdiction of a large urban school board and is presently involved in a restructuring phase with other school districts in the surrounding geographical area.

The three teachers, representing the primary, elementary and itinerant areas of the staff, volunteered to be involved in this collaborative action research study. They had been approached previously by the principal because they were to be evaluated during the school year 1996-97. Prior to this collaborative action research, the teachers, principal and I discussed the option available to document this study and each teacher voluntarily selected the portfolio option. The participants involved in collaborative research work together to solve a particular problem or

concern that is relevant to everyone. “This form of research tends to be carried out in teams which addresses its member’s concerns and then uses a recursive process of action research in carrying out its project” (Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p. 24). Furthermore, Oja and Smulyan (1989) note that “teachers engaged in action research emphasize that personal and professional growth result from participation in the process of collaborative action research” (p. 207). Ethnography and action research have been applied to this case study during this internship.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature in teacher evaluation left me to conclude that there is a need for two separate goals: i) to address accountability, and ii) to encourage professional development beyond the achievement of teaching proficiency. The development of a collaborative process which will attain both goals would give teachers and administrators the opportunity to grow together professionally. "If teachers and administrators work together to craft and tailor an instrument and a peer-inclusive evaluation system, the opportunity for self-reflection and professional growth will become a reality" (Searfoss, 1996, p. 40). The literature review will focus on summative and formative evaluation, and teacher portfolios as they relate to the collaborative process of teacher evaluation.

Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation is a judgmental function with either contract or status position as a primary objective. The process of summative evaluation results in decision making relating to employment or tenure of a teacher. This aspect of evaluation should be used only when necessary and should contain data and documents that are accurate and valid. "Traditionally, teacher evaluation has been primarily summative in nature, that is, a judgmental evaluation typically intended to assist and justify critical administrative decisions affecting teachers, such as renewal of contracts, tenure, promotion and dismissal" (Parsons, 1985, p. 1). Popham (1995) defines the primary function of summative evaluation as "the determination of a teacher's competence - not the augmentation of that competence" (p. 322). Summative evaluation can be a means of assessing and improving current evaluation processes with regard to teacher selection, assignment, reassignment, promotion and tenure. It is important therefore that educators and administrators discriminate what constitutes summative evaluation as compared to formative evaluation.

Formative Evaluation

By the early 1970's formative evaluation data became obvious in some research projects. "The procedures required data collection techniques familiar to ethnographers even though the practical nature and often relatively short time span were not entirely congruent with classical ethnographic fieldwork" (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p. 22).

More recently, formative evaluation has become an important element of the evaluation process. According to Darling-Hammond (1990), one of the major concepts that characterize the educational reform movement into the 1990's will be directed toward teacher professionalism. Warren Little (1993) reaffirms that "to professionalize teaching teachers will increasingly serve as mentors to new teachers, take on new responsibilities over time, and exert more leadership through site-based decision making" (p. 2). The formative phase is often referred to as the developmental phase of evaluation. Millman and Darling-Hammond (1990) see it as "a set of procedures designed to assist teachers in improving their own teaching" (p. 216). Formative evaluation

permits teachers to become involved in the evaluation system as it affects teachers professionally and personally. "When all staff, regardless of teaching ability, work toward improvement through a formal process, the philosophy of performance evaluation as an ongoing system for professional improvement is reinforced" (Valentine, 1992, p. 6). Emphasis placed on formative evaluation is expected not only to improve the professional level of the performance of teachers but also to reduce anxieties, frustration and negativism often associated with the whole evaluation process. "Formative teacher evaluation is intended to provide assistance and useful information to teachers in order to help them modify or improve their overall instructional technique" (Hickman, 1988, p. 7). Formative evaluation is expected to improve the content, process and outcomes of teaching for teachers. "As schools are asked to define their own improvement strategies, agendas for individual evaluation and organizational renewal become increasingly intertwined" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 17). One of the major concepts of effective formative evaluation is professional development.

To improve a teacher's performance, the school system must enlist the teacher's cooperation, motivate him(her), and guide him(her) through steps needed for improvement to occur. For the individual,

improvement relies on the development of two important conditions: (1) the knowledge that a course of action is correct, and (2) a sense of empowerment or efficacy, that is, a perception that pursuing a given course often is both worthwhile and possible.

Most teacher evaluation processes identify effective teaching without addressing the question of how to change teaching behaviour. The initiators of such processes assume that once they have discovered what ought to be done, teachers will naturally know what to do and will do it (Bollington, 1990, p. 58).

An effective formative evaluation process not only assesses a teacher's performance but can aid in improving and enhancing professional growth through professional development activities.

Teacher Portfolios

Recently there has been the recognition of the need for evaluators to engage in additional assessment methods when attempting to derive or assess a teacher's knowledge of principles, situations, teaching and learning skills and competencies. "There is a widespread agreement that traditional methods of evaluating teachers, such as generic rating scales and pencil-paper tests, fail to consider the centrality of content - specific

understanding or the complexities of classroom life where teaching occurs” (Fisher, 1994, p. 20). The teacher portfolio has emerged as a means of addressing this shortcoming. “Creating a professional portfolio can benefit a teacher in many of the same ways that teachers have observed portfolios benefiting students” (Danielson, 1996, p. 38). According to Fisher, “portfolios provide opportunities to display teaching principles in the context of the classroom . . . also, a process to develop reflection in teaching” (1994, p. 20).

Developing and implementing teacher portfolios will require time, organization and collaboration with all involved. The following questions posed by Perkins and Gelfer (1993) “may be helpful when developing teacher portfolios:

1. What does a teacher portfolio look like?
2. How is it organized?
3. What are its contents?
4. What selection process should determine the portfolio’s contents?
5. How will the teacher portfolios be evaluated? ” (p. 235).

Danielson (1996) states, “in deciding what to include in a portfolio,

teachers must reflect on their best work and determine what represents that work” (p. 38). Fisher (1994) notes, “a teacher portfolio offers the educator opportunities to display quality work examples which can be used for evaluative purposes” (p. 20). She also suggests that “another use . . . is a vehicle for the selection and development of professional entries so that teacher reflection, dialogue, and growth can occur” (Fisher, 1994, p. 20).

The introduction of teacher portfolios in the performance appraisal process of teachers will permit immediate feedback and promote a process of evaluation that is continuous. “Portfolios can be opportunities for teachers to demonstrate the complexities of their profession, a means to develop and nurture excellence in education, and a self empowering voice for teachers during assessment and evaluation” (Fisher, 1994, p. 20).

In deciding what to include in teacher portfolios, teachers must reflect on their work, the quality of that work, and determine what best

represents that work. Perkins and Gelfer (1993) suggest that teachers choose material that documents efficacy in areas such as the following:

- Knowledge of content and curriculum
- Providing appropriate learning experiences for students
- Appropriate planning
- Management of the environment and students' behaviours
- Human relationship and communication skills
- Recording and evaluating students' behaviours
- Use of available resources
- Fulfilment of professional responsibilities (p. 236).

Furthermore, these authors reinforce that, "portfolios provide a lucid picture - for both principal and teacher - of how staff members are developing and improving" (p. 237). Portfolios are a means to enhance the principles of teaching and also develop reflection in teaching.

In recent years, educators have been cooperating in developing more effective teacher evaluation procedures. This recognition of the difficulties associated with current practices has promoted reviews among various school systems and their personnel. There are two important concepts that must be recognized when developing or revising procedures; i) teachers and administrators must work collaboratively

ensuring that all needs are met, and ii), administrators and teachers have a responsibility toward constant professional development of the teaching profession.

Perkins and Gelfer (1993) state that, "each school program should organize its own criteria for evaluating teacher performance" (p. 235).

Administrators and teachers need to rethink the limits of traditional teacher evaluation practices. The task for evaluation is not to mimic an Olympic ice skating competition . . . the goal is to help teachers develop individual talents, discover new ones, and enhance their own distinctive ways of interacting with students (Bryant and Currin, 1995, p. 252).

Generally, current literature suggests a move toward formative evaluation for the purpose of enhancing teacher professional growth.

One method of formative evaluation identified in the literature is the development and implementation of teacher portfolios. The literature in this area suggests that teacher portfolios will enhance teacher evaluation and promote professional growth.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH COMPONENT

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to analyze the response of three teachers and a principal to the use of portfolios in formative evaluation, the primary purpose of which is the professional growth of the teacher.

Teachers are generally growth oriented and have the need and desire to be as competent as their potential allows. Therefore, an effective model of evaluation is necessary when stressing the link between teacher evaluation and professional growth. "The argument is that teachers are far more likely to improve if they are provided with informed feedback and opportunities to communicate effectively about their work than if they are made to go through an 'uneven, desultory ritual' or a 'standard checklist' approach " (McLaughlin, 1986, p. 164). Therefore, a system of communication for

teachers and administrators must be apparent in the process of teacher evaluation. This will permit accessibility by all involved in the collaborative teaching and evaluation strategies determined by the process of formative evaluation.

Definition of Key Terms

Formative Evaluation:

Formative evaluation is a set of procedures designed to assist teachers in improving their own teaching. It assumes (a) professional teachers constantly strive for continued individual excellence; (b) given sufficient information, professional teachers can and will evaluate themselves and modify their performance; and (c) the evaluation procedures provide feedback designed to assist teachers in making judgments about how they can best improve their teaching (Millman and Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 216-217).

Summative Evaluation:

Summative evaluation is used for the dismissal of teachers, to help assign teachers to levels of a career ladder (merit pay) program, and to grant or deny tenure to beginning teachers. Summative evaluation has as its primary function, the determination of a teacher's competence - not the augmentation of that competence (Popham, 1993, p. 322).

Educational Ethnography:

Educational ethnography research is defined as the process of providing scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts. Ethnographic research relies heavily on observation, description, and qualitative judgments or interpretations of whatever phenomena are being studied. It takes place in the natural setting and focuses on processes in an attempt to obtain a holistic picture (Weirisma, 1991, p. 17).

Action Research:

Action research is a disciplined inquiry (research) in the context of focused efforts to improve the quality of an organization and its performance (action) (Calhoun, 1993, p. 62). Action researchers study problems that grow out of the community, work within a group to determine actions to be taken, and evaluate the effect of these actions within the community (Calhoun, 1994, p. 16).

Collaborative Action Research:

Collaborative action research suggests that each group represented in the process shares in the planning, implementation, and analysis of the research (Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p. 1).

Portfolio:

The portfolio is a cumulative record of progress that fosters reflective thinking and can be used for advisement, assessment and eventual placement

(Mokhtari et al., 1996, p.245). A portfolio is a folder of personal data on an individual includes a record of achievement, samples of work, observations made by a supervisor, a colleague, or oneself, personal evaluations and any other relevant data (Perkins and Gelfer, 1993, p. 235).

Significance of the Study

The research to date indicates an increased emphasis on formative evaluation as a means of enhancing professional growth. Teacher portfolios are an emerging means of further developing formative evaluation. This study is a qualitative case study for the use of teacher portfolios as a means of understanding the relationship between formative evaluation and professional growth.

Research Questions

The ultimate goal of this study was to investigate the effect that teacher portfolios would have on teacher evaluation, particularly in the formative

evaluation process. Fisher complies that “with planning, implementation, and evaluation of portfolio entries, the view of teaching shifts from that of a technical disseminator of knowledge to that of an educational professional” (1994, p. 20). The following three questions were used as a guide in this research exploring the issues surrounding the use of teacher portfolios:

1. How did the teachers in this internship view the use of teacher portfolios in the evaluation process?
2. What issues emerged from the use of portfolios as noted by the teachers involved?
3. How did the principal view the use of teacher portfolios?

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERNSHIP

Preamble

The internship component of this study was conducted during the university fall semester 1996, a period of twelve weeks. The research was conducted with three teachers and a principal of an urban primary/elementary school. These three teachers were selected for evaluation by the principal and agreed to participate in this study. The role of the teachers was to develop individual portfolios and the role of the principal was to utilize these portfolios in the evaluation process.

As researcher and vice-principal in the primary/elementary school where the internship was conducted, it was my goal that this study provide the beginning for an effective evaluation process benefiting all involved. Upon returning to my administrative position it is hoped that this method of formative evaluation and the use of teacher portfolios will continue.

Methodology and Data Analysis

This case study used qualitative methodology relying on participant and group interviews as the primary source of data collection. Additional data were collected by reviewing and examining the teacher portfolios completed during the internship. The portfolios were examined for content, personal professional knowledge and reflection on practice. I met with the teachers and the principal to explain and discuss the purpose of this internship and their involvement in the study. I developed an interview schedule during the case study that guided all participants through this collaborative action research (Appendix A). I conducted one focus-group interview with all participants presenting a base portfolio to each teacher and explaining the role of the portfolios in teacher evaluation. The base portfolio consisted of sample forms for self-evaluation, pre-classroom lesson plan, pre and post conference, portfolio communication and feedback, classroom instructional observation and three articles explaining teacher portfolios and their contents. I also made weekly contact with each teacher, and at this time encouraged

the participants to discuss and recall any experiences or questions with regard to their role of developing individual portfolios. During the final week of the internship, I conducted individual interviews with each teacher and the principal. During these interviews I focused the discussion on the three research questions and it is those findings that I have reported in this study.

The data for this study were drawn from the individual interview notes as well as review of written reflections in each teacher portfolio. Data analysis revealed patterns and similarities between the primary and elementary teacher; however these patterns did not emerge for the itinerant teacher. The lack of collected student samples and parent communications left her with an incomplete section in her portfolio.

Although, the generalizability of the findings were limited to the sample population, the study findings and the developed model of teacher portfolios provide a conceptual guideline for practice. The conceptualization of formative evaluation and the developed model of teacher portfolios presented in this research can offer a possible framework for administrators

and school staffs to assess their present evaluation procedures. This research attempted to identify the link between formative evaluation and professional growth by the implementation of teacher portfolios. However as the participants observed, initiated and reflected on this proposed model they recognized that further research and analysis of teacher portfolios in formative evaluation should be undertaken with greater numbers to allow some degree of generalization.

Research Findings

Question 1: How did the teachers in this internship view the use of teacher portfolios in the evaluation process?

One teacher who had been evaluated before by another evaluation process responded by comparing both evaluation processes. This teacher felt that the use of portfolios in evaluation was better than the more traditional checklist

approach because “you have evidence of your strengths and weaknesses, samples of your best work, and most importantly open communication and feedback between the administrator and teacher” (Interview, Teacher A, December 15, 1996). She felt that this open communication created dialogue that could enhance the development of professional growth of a teacher. The other two teachers, however had not previously experienced any evaluation process either summative or formative. These two teachers had been granted tenure without being fully cognizant of their strengths and weaknesses as identified by them or an evaluator. One of them indicated that the use of portfolios “did identify your strengths and weaknesses as well as empowering you to identify work that was of value and importance to you” (Interview, Teacher C, December 15, 1996).

One teacher was not convinced of the validity of the portfolios in evaluation. There was some confusion as to whether the results and findings produced in the portfolios were being evaluated, in addition to the teacher’s performance in the classroom. This teacher was reassured that the contents

in the teacher's portfolios would contribute to the whole evaluation process. Portfolios allow teachers to evaluate their own performance as well as contribute data that are helpful to the principal during the formative evaluation process. This teacher felt that the end product of teaching, dissemination of knowledge and learning by the teacher was not presented in the portfolios. She felt that class observation was a more credible diagnosis of a teacher's performance.

Another teacher agreed that the contents in a portfolio reflected a teacher's best work; she was concerned that this could create artificial expectations of a classroom observation by the principal. She hoped that the principal would realize that plans and activities often change during the actual classroom presentation.

All three teachers agreed that the portfolio would be a valuable tool and resource in the area of career choices and job interviews. The portfolios represent an individual teacher's work, philosophy of education, teaching experiences, letters of reference, documentation of previous professional

development and any other information submitted by each individual. They recognized that once a teacher completed a portfolio for evaluation purposes, it could be used as a personal file for gathering additional teaching materials and personal and professional information.

Question 2: What issues emerged from the use of portfolios as noted by the teachers involved?

Considerable time commitment, the question of what was actually being assessed and the need for an organized framework were the issues noted by the teachers involved in this study. They also recognized that there was an improvement in communication between the principal and the teachers being evaluated. Self reflection by each individual participant increased in quality and duration.

The teachers claimed that completing the portfolios required a considerable time commitment. However, the researcher was aware that

this concern may have been alleviated if clearer direction regarding the portfolio contents had been given at the start of the study. Upon revisiting the internship proposal it became clear that an organizational framework in the base portfolio would have assisted the participants in determining what to include in their portfolios and subsequently reduce the time commitment.

As the teacher's work developed to meet the needs of this study, specific needs for an organized framework for the portfolios was identified by all three teachers as essential for final completion of the portfolios. The teachers realized that an organized framework is necessary to create a portfolio that will identify and display the professional practices and growth of a teacher. They indicated that a successful portfolio should consist of a varied collection of data. Several suggestions by the teachers included: samples of a teacher's work such as lesson plans and thematic units, performance and professional documents, observations made by the principal during classroom observations, written progress reports, samples of written communications to parents and students, records of parent teacher

conferences, letters of appreciation from parents, and records of special career events.

The teachers felt that the portfolio should be a gathering tool of materials and information. Their concern was that the contents of the portfolio would be evaluated in addition to their teaching practices. They were reassured by the principal that their professional presentation and teaching skills in the classroom would be the main focus of the formative evaluation process.

One teacher felt that the portfolio was an intrusion, an invasion of privacy. She felt uncomfortable with, as she put it, "tooting your own horn" (Interview, Teacher B, December 16, 1996). She stated that submitting what is considered an individual's best work would not suit the personality of all teachers. As an itinerant teacher she feared the lack of feedback communication from parents and outside agencies, as well as the lack of students' work samples could not indicate an end product. The other two teachers felt that the portfolios made a teacher more aware of their teaching

strategies strengths and weaknesses. Such awareness empowered a teacher to reflect on his/her preparation and presentation of teaching techniques and plans.

Question 3: How did the principal view the use of teacher portfolios?

The principal felt that the use of teacher portfolios enabled the teachers to identify their strengths and place such evidence in their portfolios. This assisted the individual teacher to determine their professional goals and objectives. Individual weaknesses were also identified in the portfolios thereby permitting the teacher to be courageous in identifying needs for professional growth. The initiation of a conversation with the administrator created a powerful base from which to work on areas where a teacher lacked certain skills. This presented the administrator the opportunity to become a collegial role model and offer suggestions and provide support to the teacher. The principal felt that the portfolio approach was much more

collegial for both administrator and teacher thus providing more open communication.

Following a classroom observation, the post-conference was more productive due to the previous reading of the portfolio entries. The principal also felt that the portfolio method reduced possible intimidation of the teacher by the administrator.

Upon examining the portfolios for content and written reflection, the principal felt she was able to assess the level of professional growth. She acknowledged evidence of an increase of professional growth even during this short space of time particularly in the area of classroom management. The principal noticed that the use of portfolios encouraged and empowered the teachers involved in this study to work with other teachers, seeking advice and new teaching strategies. The principal felt that she was able to monitor teaching performance more closely than in previously used evaluation procedures. She also noted that the use of portfolios enabled teachers to develop a non-threatening form of communication with administrators and

other colleagues. The principal indicated that the teachers themselves chose to make positive changes in their practices. They would seek advice from her and other colleagues if weaknesses were identified during the evaluation process. The principal advocated such changes feeling that this could only enhance a teacher's performance.

The principal recommended as a result of this study, the inclusion of a curriculum vitae in the introductory section of the portfolio. This curriculum vitae would include materials identifying a teacher's previous experience, what a teacher sees as his/her strengths and weaknesses, teacher's philosophy of education, professional development experiences, personal and educational data, and a description of a particular teaching experience that may have affected his/her teaching career.

The principal felt that the strength of the portfolios was that they provided, not only the data base for evaluation, but also the opportunity to observe the principles of teaching exhibited by the teachers, the opportunity for guided practice by the principal, and the incubation of ideas and new

strategies by all involved. During the process, the principal communicated suggestions, ideas and strategies to the teachers as a result of observing, reading and sharing information in the portfolios. For her, the portfolios became the means of recording data, thus documenting the professional growth of the teachers. Its greatest significance was the communication base it provided for the principal.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The conclusions provided in this report are based primarily on findings resulting from this research internship. The reader is cautioned, however, that based on a small sample size and short time frame any possible generalizations are limited.

The purpose of this internship was to determine three teachers' and a principal's perceptions of the use of an alternate means of evaluation that would enhance and improve the quality of teacher performance and professional growth. The teacher portfolio was therefore designed to assist the teachers and principal in creating a foundation for further professional growth. Portfolios in evaluation were able to assist teachers to acquire teaching skills, to review acquired knowledge of professional issues or subjects, and to consider areas where further professional growth would be

useful. "Portfolios can be opportunities for teachers to demonstrate the complexities of their profession, a means to develop and nurture excellence in education, and a self empowering voice for teachers during assessment and evaluation" (Fisher, 1994, p. 20).

This study concluded that for the three teachers and the principal, the use of teacher portfolios presented an opportunity to improve the process of teacher evaluation. However, despite this, one teacher in particular cautioned against the use of portfolios as an alternate method in formative evaluation. This happened even though she was an active participant in the process of utilizing portfolios and had worked collaboratively with the principal in a situation conducive to developing and enhancing communication. This research process identified the portfolio, "a folder of personal data on an individual" (Perkins and Gelfer, 1993, p.235), as the teacher's personal file, one which can become an active part of a teacher's career.

Collaboration was apparent throughout this study. The principal, in particular, felt that she and the participant teachers experienced increased

opportunity for collegial interaction. It was the implementation of teacher portfolios that made the collaborative, collegial model of formative evaluation both manageable to follow due process for the teachers and the principal. "With planning, implementation, and evaluation of portfolio entries, the view of teaching shifts from that of a technical disseminator of knowledge to that of an educational professional" (Fisher, 1994, p. 20).

For all participants, the evaluation process was truly a formative process to be fully documented in the portfolio and to be the source of evidence for continuing professional growth. The portfolio of each teacher has the potential to provide evidence, not only to the evaluator, but to the teacher, of the professional growth being experienced. The voices of the teachers involved attested to the professional growth of their teaching skills and self - confidence throughout this study. The level of teacher support for this model indicates that the use of portfolios is relevant and necessary to the professional growth of teachers.

Recommendations

The following are four recommendations for further research on the use of teacher portfolios in teacher evaluation.

1. Further research ought to be undertaken to determine teachers' and principal's responses to the use of portfolios. The limited work of the internship has only suggested the need for full-scale research on the views of teachers and principals.

2. There was some confusion during this study surrounding the actual contents of a portfolio. Further investigation is necessary into the use and development of portfolios and the selection of contents for the purpose of teacher evaluation.

3. Research ought to be undertaken to determine the extent to which the use of teacher portfolios can lead to improvement in teaching and professional growth of teachers. This internship has not measured this important aspect of formative evaluation; however in order for portfolios to have significance as an alternative

method of teacher evaluation, there must be reasonable documentation of their potential for teacher professional development.

4. Research ought to be undertaken to determine the extent to which the use of teacher portfolios in teacher evaluation can enhance the professional growth of a principal.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Schedule:

Focus Group Session	September 20, 1996
First Interview with Principal	October 4, 1996
Second Interview with Principal	November 7, 1996
Class Observations	November 4-7, 1996
Teacher Interviews	December 13-19, 1996
Third Interview with Principal	December 30, 1996
Collection of Portfolios	December 20, 1996

Appendix B

Consent Forms:

- 1. Teachers' Consent Form**
- 2. Individual Teachers' Consent Form**
- 3. Principals' Consent Form**
- 4. School Board Consent Form**

LETTER OF CONSENT

I _____ approached the three teachers who were to be evaluated during this school year of 1996-1997 and asked each one to VOLUNTARILY PARTICIPATE in this study. Each one agreed to do so and complete a teacher portfolio as an alternate means of assessment in their evaluation. Their signatures below is an indication of their understanding of this agreement and their consent to participate in this study.

Thank You,
Ina Kearley

Teachers Signatures

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Dear Colleague,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland and under the supervision of Dr. Alice Collins. As part of my internship research component, I will be researching the use of teacher portfolios as an alternate means of assessment in teacher evaluation. I am requesting your permission to have you participate in this study.

Your participation will require you to create, along with this researcher, a teacher portfolio. This portfolio may include samples of your class work, lesson plans, communication: from administrators, teachers, parents and students, curriculum plans, educational training records, teacher performance documents, and any other material that reflects your work.

I also request that you participate in a semi-structured interview with this researcher. At this interview I will ask your opinions and reflections with regard to the three questions presented in the study proposal. These interviews will take place during the week of December 9th - 13th, 1996 and last approximately 30 minutes. These interview will be tape-recorded for the purpose of data collection, however, following analyses of the data collected on these tapes they will be destroyed. However if you are uncomfortable with the use of a tape-recorder, one will not be used during the interview.

I also request that you permit me to attend one class observation session along with the principal. The purpose is to observe the principal's evaluation process as it relates to the use of teacher portfolios.

All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential and at no time will individual be identified. Participation in this study is voluntary as well as your use of a teacher portfolio in the evaluation process. I ask that you also understand that participation in this study is not a required part of your evaluation year but is voluntary for the purpose of this study as requested by this researcher, Ina Kearley. Please unders and that you may withdraw from this study at any time. The results of this study will be available to you upon request.

If you are in agreement with participating in this study please sign below. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at . If you wish to speak with a resource person at Memorial University please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programmes, Faculty of Education.

Thank You.

Yours Sincerely,

Ina Kearley

I _____ agree to participate in the research study as described above. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw permission at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Date

Signature

PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Principal,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland and under the supervision of Dr. Alice Collins. As part of my internship research component, I will be researching the use of teacher portfolios as an alternate means of assessment in teacher evaluation. I am requesting your permission to have you participate in this study.

Your participation will require you to evaluate three teachers of your staff by the use of teacher portfolios. These portfolios may include samples of their class work, lesson plans, communications from administrators, teachers, parents and students, curriculum plans, educational training records, teacher performance documents, and any other material that reflects their work.

All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time. The results of this research will be available to you upon request.

If you are in agreement with participating in this study please sign below. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at _____ If you wish to speak with a resource person at Memorial University please contact Dr. Alice Collins, Faculty of Education, Graduate Studies.

Thank You.

Yours Sincerely,

Ina Kearley

I _____ agree to participate in the research study as described above. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw permission at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Date

Signature

SCHOOL BOARD CONSENT FORM

Dear .

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland and under the supervision of Dr. Alice Collins. As part of my internship research component, I will be researching the use of teacher portfolios as an alternate means of assessment in teacher evaluation. I am requesting your permission for me to complete this research study at

The school's participation will include the participation of the principal and three teachers. These individuals and this researcher will form an action research team and develop teacher portfolios as an alternate means to assessing teachers during the process of teacher evaluation. This study is hoped to demonstrate that the use of teacher portfolios can be used to evaluate the professional growth demonstrated by all involved as documented by his/her portfolio.

All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified. Participation in this study is voluntary and the individuals may withdraw from this study at any time. The results of this study will be available to you upon request.

If you are in agreement with the school's participation in this study please sign below. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at . If you wish to speak with a resource person at Memorial University please contact Dr. Alice Collins, Faculty of Education, Graduate Studies.

Thank You.

Yours Sincerely,

Ina Kearley

I _____ agree to have _____
participate in the research study as described
above. I understand that participation is entirely
voluntary and that individuals may withdraw permission at
any time. All information is strictly confidential and no
individual will be identified.

Date

Signature



