Portfolios:
Teacher Assessment
as
Transformative Learning

by

Liliana Vani

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract of Dissertation

Portfolios: Assessment as Transformative Learning
Liliana Vani, Ph.D.
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto: 2000

Purpose and Methodology
This study examined at the potential of portfolios to sustain development as transformative learning, and perceived professional competence as inclusive of communicative, emancipatory and technical interests. The portfolio process was organized around four main vehicles which served as the primary sources for data collection: reflective activities, group/individual sessions, written peer feedback, and readings in chosen area of inquiry. A descriptive case approach was used. The portfolio and critical reflections of one participant were subsequently analyzed in regard to their meaning structures and changes in understanding. This analysis was amplified by comments provided by the three other participants. The interpretation of texts derived from the sources described above each combined narrative, semiotic and deconstructive analyses.

Findings and Conclusion
Teachers indicated that each of the vehicles used to promote teacher reflection on presuppositions of understanding were useful but a combination of reflective activities and group discussions were particularly informative in eliciting new insights which generated modes of “reflective action.” Goal-setting
and its attainment, as documented in the portfolio, was a source of pride and achievement and promoted the teachers' sense of professionalism.

Findings from this study revealed that each of the participants viewed their participation in a portfolio process as promoting their development in the following ways: increased self-confidence and self-esteem, sense of empowerment and personal ownership over the learning-assessment process, improved collegial relations, better student-teacher rapport, improved teaching practices, enhanced student learning and an increased sense of professionalism.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that a portfolio process invariably sustains teachers' development of: enhanced awareness of sources in terms of needs, biases, patterns of behaviour, contexts, self-perceptions; metacognitive understanding of how they learn and conceptualize their practice; an ability to articulate and explain the concrete particulars of practice conceptually; transformed understanding of educational roles, students, curriculum, learning and teaching.

The findings of this study also support concepts central to transformation theory: learning and development derive from a critical reflection of presuppositions and occur in a problem solving context. Transformation is critically connected to learner interests and forms of knowledge and results in more inclusive, integrated perspectives for making sense of self, others and experiences, leading to an enhanced sense of empowerment or "liberation." The portfolio process positively supports transformative learning and enhanced communicative competence.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Motivation for the Study

In the spring of '92, I attended the now-annual *Reading for the Love of It Conference*. Donald Graves participated along with the various writers, educators, researchers and consultants. He focused on the use of student portfolios, reconceptualizing current modes of assessment from a social-constructionist perspective. His ideas resonated with my personal beliefs and classroom experiences and I integrated a portfolio approach to student evaluation into my daily practice.

My interest in assessment practices in general derives in part from my experiences as an educator, both as one who is evaluated by administrators and who evaluates students. In both instances, I have keenly experienced the problematic relation between the knower and the known or the perceiver and the perceived. My growing sense of disquiet (in the latter role) led me to reconsider the nature and purpose of student assessment and to favour more diversified and inclusive methods than the education system traditional uses.

After realizing the potential that the portfolio process offered for empowering students, I saw that this approach provided an equally exciting opportunity for educators. I knew that teacher evaluation generated the same concerns, issues, and anxieties that are experienced in the teacher-student context.

*I agree with your comment, Paul – teacher evaluation and “supervision” are a critical area in our roles as*
principals. Yet this is an area about which we (administrators and would-be administrators) are the least informed and are ill-prepared to oversee. If the stated outcome of teacher evaluation is to promote teacher growth we need to search for alternative forms of "assessment" which will reconceptualize teacher development and teaching practices. Assisting teachers in the creation of a portfolio offers unexplored possibilities conducive to the enhancement of teaching excellence through personal and professional development. Many Board documents hint at a shift in teacher evaluation, yet there is no process that adequately speaks to the needs of educators and reflects the complexities of the teaching-learning experience.

Personal reflections from OISE Principal’s Course – June 3, 1995.

In voicing my personal interest in portfolio development I acknowledge that all adult learning is personally motivated, arising from individual needs and professional interests (Habermas, 1971).

The initiating impulse for this study can also be situated within the current climate of educational restructuring and professionalization of teaching. It necessitates reforms in all areas including teacher assessment and on-going professional development. Further, the dissatisfaction expressed by educators with current forms of assessment supports the need for such reforms. Cynthia, a participant in this study, in describing her experiences with teacher evaluation, captured both the sentiments shared by the three other participants and the tenor of educators’ lament in general:

L: Can you describe your past experiences relative to evaluation?
C: I think I’ve mentioned these numerous times. I just look at it (evaluation) as somebody needing a piece of paper to say I worked there. There was no interest in the

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1 “Supervision” is integral to formative assessment and differs considerably in its intentions from summative evaluation. The former seeks to support educators’ personal and professional development while the latter addresses individual and system accountability. The use of portfolios in formative evaluation, that is, for purposes of development, is germane to this study.
quality of teaching, in what I was doing, or how to improve it. I didn't ever really respect it (evaluation) as anything other than an accounting of my years of experience. It wasn't anything that was ever going to impact on me or change the way I do something. That's wrong! That's what it (evaluation) should do. It should encourage you to make some changes so that you can grow as a person and as a professional (Cynthia, p.139).

What Cynthia desires from assessment – “it should encourage you to make some changes so that you can grow as a person and as a professional” – is confirmed by research literature (Lieberman, 1995; Aiex, 1993; Gitlin & Smith, 1989, 1990; Gitlin & Bullough, 1987). In addition, boards of education seemingly advocate the same outcomes:

Any positive teacher review system will develop professional competencies [...] Such teacher review must be carried out in a professional manner and result in professional and personal development. The process must be an ongoing series of interactions which are desired to improve quality of instruction and learning opportunities (TCDSB, AGI Document, 1992, p. 3).

Clearly expressed is the desire for a “review system” to promote teachers' “professional competencies” and to foster “professional and personal development.” Professional competencies serve as standards by which to determine “effective” teaching. Of the six standards cited, three focus on the demonstration of technical skills: “management of the learning environment, utilization of teaching strategies and development of professional capabilities” (TCDSB, AGI Document, 1992, p. 24). We are left, however, to speculate as to what is meant by “professional capabilities.” In practice these stated intentions are lost when policy is translated into practice:

L: My next question is, if the [board assessment] document

\[2\] Of the three other standards, one involves catholicity or “contribution to the catholic character of the school.” The remaining two address interpersonal dimensions: “cooperation and coordination of effort” and “interpersonal relationships” (TCDSB, AGI Document, 1992, p.24).
says, it is concerned with personal, professional growth, do you find it works in that regard?

V: No, definitely not! My past experience with evaluation is not of a process but as an event. For example, I was given two or three sheets. I wrote down things that I've done and gave this to the administrator. I've never had an experience as described in the AGI document. Technically you are to sit down at the beginning of the year, focus on your professional goals and interests, and have an ongoing dialogue as the document says. It is absolutely meaningless, no one takes it seriously. You have no exchange, no dialogue - just your boss doing his or her job 3 (Veronica, p. 89).

The reasons for the disparity between what is claimed and what is practiced are as numerous as the individuals who put policy into practice. The subtext of Veronica’s comment identifies reasons for her discontent and that of others. The practices she cites fail to consider elements essential to human development and learning. These include the desire for dialogue and interaction and for the recognition of the social character of learning. They neglect the importance of personal interests and of professional needs, and the requisite knowledges or “competencies” of such interests. Not all educator interests and discourses of knowledge pertain to “professional competencies,” especially given the standards which so narrowly define them.

It is my position that assessments of “professional competencies” focus on technical interests with a corresponding emphasis on the acquisition and demonstration of technical knowledge. Important facets of adult learning theory are consequently disregarded. Examples include the reasons adults learn, the way they learn and how they develop through their learning.

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3 Veronica’s words are particularly ironic given that two of the standards focus on interrelationships. The assessment process itself keeps communicative encounters between administrators at a minimum and provides no forum for collegial exchanges.
Assessment practices currently focus on "effective teaching" as the development and examination of "professional competencies." An exclusive focus on competencies such as a technical interest invariably reduces the complexities of teaching to techniques, skills, and management strategies, otherwise known as "tricks of the teaching trade."

I propose that assessment practices be articulated around a conception of professional competencies that comprise three forms of knowledge: technical, communicative, and emancipatory. Development and achievement of these knowledges would consequently provide evidence of "effective" teaching.

Foundational Concepts

Knowledge and Human Interests

The dissatisfaction educators express rises in part from the failure of assessment practices to address a key concern in adult learning: the desire to understand. They also fail to account for the importance of human interests as central to this concern.

Mezirow's (1991) use of Habermas' (1971) conceptualization of knowledge and human interests provides a helpful framework for understanding how educators learn to teach. Habermas describes human interests as technical, practical, and emancipatory, with each sphere of interest defining what society views as "knowledge." This, in turn, shapes the processes of learning, development, and assessment.

Technical interests seek and require instrumental knowledge as a result the acquisition of skills, techniques, instructional methods, and
strategies viewed as "know how" relevant to educator practice, is both taught and tested. While technical interests and a corresponding desire for technical knowledge is desirable, this should not be effected as a pervasive ideology operationalized through education programs, teacher development, and assessment practices. Veronica's (another participants') poignantly voiced dissatisfaction with current practice clearly indicates that a technical focus does not adequately address educator interests or requisite knowledges.

Practical interests encompass the desire to be understood and to understand self, others, and personal experiences. These interests prompt social action in response to individual, collective, and cultural needs. The processes through which learners pursue and implement practical interests are "communicative" and involve language and other symbolic forms. Through language we talk, listen, write to each other, and read texts. Language is not a transparent medium, it is socially coded. In our pursuit of practical interests, the knowledge defined by society is constituted through social norms, traditions, and values that undergird our culture and permit individuals to have a shared understanding. Practical interests can be defined as social in intent (understanding), as linguistic processes (language), and as producing behaviour patterns ("communicative action"). Knowledge of teaching is practical knowledge, and teaching is a practical enterprise. Teachers assessment of their own practices indicates a preoccupation with practical interests. Consider Veronica’s approach to assessing her day:

L: What criteria do you use when reflecting on your own day?
V: Sometimes it’s quite simple as when I reach out to a child, am I communicating with him/her in such a way that something of significance has happened. Am I addressing that child’s needs? Are they (the students) excited about learning? I think about the whole tone of the
Practical knowledge arises from and is immersed in social interaction and involves communication with others with the mutual aim of understanding. Educators seek to comprehend their roles, to grow, and to develop so as to better understand the needs of learners and the social context in which they work. The process through which practical knowledge is acquired is termed “communicative learning” by Mezirow (1991).

Emancipatory interests emerge from our desire to grow and develop. “People are interested in self-knowledge, self-awareness, and an understanding of how their past has shaped their way of being. This includes a desire to be free from self- and social distortions of knowledge” (Cranton, 1996, p. 20). This interest leads the learner through critical self-reflection to emancipatory knowledge. Mezirow describes this knowledge as:

emancipation from libidinal, linguistic, epistemic, institutional or environmental forces that limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond human control. These forces include the misconceptions, ideologies, and psychological distortions in prior learning that produces or perpetuates unexamined relations of dependence (Mezirow, 1991, p. 87).

Mezirow identifies the process of gaining emancipatory knowledge as “transformative learning.”

Practitioner needs and ways of knowing are best sustained through assessment practices and learning processes that foster and account for teachers’ “communicative” and “emancipatory” interests. To achieve competence in these areas educators need support, and these interests should be at the heart of teaching and assessment. Given my position, that
professional competencies consist of instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory knowledge, an assessment practice that accounts for and develops such knowledges can lead to professional development. The two key foci of formative assessment are to enhance professional competencies and to foster personal and professional development. These areas become interconnected when professional competencies are reformulated as being situated in the learner's interests and requisite knowledges. As articulated in board policy and as practiced, these two areas are not seen as mutually reinforcing but rather as exclusive of each other. Yet a focus on enhancing professional competencies can result in teacher development (and vice versa).

Discussion thus far has addressed why we need to reconstrue professional competencies as comprised of instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory knowledges. The following section examines how cultivating such competencies can lead to teacher development vis-à-vis transformative learning. To do this I look closely at how our communicative interests, which are motivated by our need to understand, collaborate with our desire to be free of understandings that "limit our options and rational control over our lives." More specifically, we need to ask, how is meaning constructed, understanding achieved, and experience interpreted?

Meaning Perspectives/Transformative Learning

Teachers are learners, actively constructing the meaning of self, others,
and personal experiences. To make meaning is to understand. To understand and be understood is a central impulse in our pursuit of learning and in our development. Individuals construct meanings so as to make sense of life experiences by using frames of reference or meaning perspectives.

Meaning perspectives are "broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). They play a major role in the learning process because they act as "selective codes," which filter perception and comprehension of our experiences. Learning entails using a meaning, while meaning is interpretation. Therefore, learning is a process of interpreting experiences which Mezirow defines in this way, "Learning may be understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (1991, p. 12). Meaning perspectives are active without our knowing and it is only when we are confronted by a dilemma whereby familiar ways of construing meaning do not help us to make sense of new experiences that our premises are brought into conscious awareness.

Reflection is central to this process and is defined as "attending to the grounds (justification) for one's beliefs...and involves a critique of assumptions" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223).

Communicative and emancipatory learning requires the following: "reflection" (articulation of values and beliefs), "critical reflection" (looking at assumptions supporting beliefs), and "reflective action" (acting on new understanding that results from changes in meaning perspectives and whose effects can be emancipatory). The communicative act is norm-governed and requires two modes of assessment to determine the validity of claims: a critique of the assertion being made, and more importantly, a critique of the
social norms and cultural codes in which it is embedded.

When reflection occurs within a problem-solving context, a learner can focus on the "content," "process," or "premise" of a problem. When reflection prompts a learner to question "why" in examining premises about self and the socially shaped constructions of their knowing, then transformations in meaning perspective are possible. Transformative learning results when people experience changes in their meaning perspectives. In this process, learning leads to development when premises (meaning perspectives) are altered. As well, transformative learning enhances a learner's "communicative competence." Mezirow cites Bowers' definition of communicative competence as "the individual's ability to negotiate meanings and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 355).

If the intended purpose of assessment is enhancing professional competencies and sustaining personal and professional development, we need to reconceptualize "teacher development" as transformative learning and assessment as seeking professional competence vis-à-vis "communicative competence." Mezirow's transformation theory provides a useful conceptual framework to theorize the assessment and development of professional competencies as transformative learning. I believe that we can achieve teacher assessment as "communicative competence" through a portfolio process articulated around a framework of transformative learning theory.

5 Not all learning is transformative. Learning that results in a change in meaning perspective is viewed as transformative. Such changes result in "action," which is defined in the context of transformation theory as, "making a decision, not necessarily an immediate behaviour change" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 226). Development occurs when learning results in transformed understanding. Thus assessment practices that sustain transformative learning can lead to teacher development.
Given my reconceptualization of assessment as transformative learning, an evaluation system must account for and sustain the following: instrumental, communicative and emancipatory interests and requisite knowledges. The system must conceive of learning as interpretation, as meaning perspectives as central to understanding (interpreting) experiences, and as critical reflection being integral to this process. Perspective transformation is therefore integral to learning and to the development of viewpoints that are "more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of our experience." Assessment as transformative learning begins with learner interests, self-defined needs, and the desire to understand self and others. Such assessment enables learners to become aware of the reasons for their needs, and it demonstrates how meaning perspectives limit the way in which they perceive, think, feel, and act. Consequently it promotes more enabling and inclusive perspectives.

Need for the Study

In 1992, the Toronto Catholic District School Board (referred to hereafter as TCDSB) reviewed its evaluation document and issued a revised version entitled TCDSB Model For Appraisal, Growth and Improvement in Teaching Practices (AGI). The Board’s goal and mission statement focus on the nature and quality of the teaching-learning environment, with a view to "promot[ing] growth for the individual."

The evaluation model described in the AGI document identifies three distinct processes or streams: appraisal, growth, and improvement. The appraisal stream focuses on a "teacher’s satisfactory performance." A formal
recording mechanism, based on pre-established criteria includes various stages and concludes with a "superordinate's" summative report. The growth stream seeks to promote "professional growth, career development and potential for promotion." This is achieved through a cooperative process, wherein teachers establish goals in collaboration with the superordinate or mentor. Teacher development is the focus of both the appraisal and growth components, although the former concludes with a summative evaluation that serves as a reference for those seeking promotion. At this time the Toronto Catholic District School Board is revising its promotion and procedural guidelines with the intent of making portfolios an essential component. The improvement strand serves as a disciplinary mechanism for those whose professional responsibilities and duties are seriously compromised; it also has legal implications beyond the scope and focus of this study. In this study, I focus on teachers whose competence is not in question and for whom professional development is a primary concern. The group encompasses (according to a recent actuarial report) 97 percent of the teaching force (Mercer, 1996).

**Purpose of Study**

While the AGI document combines both formative and summative orientations to teacher assessment, it lacks a cohesive structure that can systematically document (as it sustains) growth. Portfolios provide both a process and a comprehensive "structure for documenting and reflecting on their [teachers'] practice... [B]y collecting an array of information about their teaching over time in authentic contexts, teachers can build a broad and
textured picture of their practice” (Wolf et al., 1995, p. 31). Addressing this disparity, portfolios are a mechanism through which student learning, teacher development, and assessment merge.

Student learning is the goal of both professional development and teacher evaluation programs, yet these programs are loosely coupled at best. Teachers view traditional approaches to professional development and evaluation with great skepticism. The question is how to design professional development and teacher evaluation programs that work together to “improve student learning by design, not chance” (Regan, 1996, p. 1).

If the purpose of teacher evaluation is “to improve [the] quality of instruction and learning opportunities” for students (TCDSB, 1992, p. 3), then the aim of formative assessment is to promote teacher development that enhances professional competencies. Using transformation theory to conceptualize portfolios, the two practices viewed historically as separate can be merged into mutually reinforcing processes. The use of portfolios responds to the urgent need for ongoing professional development and it encompasses educators’ instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory interests. Essential to teacher learning and development is critical reflection concerning presuppositions of beliefs, attitudes, and ways of understanding. When educators question beliefs and actively pursue problems of practice growth occurs.

In this study I seek to determine whether a portfolio process can promote professional competence and teacher development as transformative learning. I achieved this through the following:

- assisting learners in reflection i.e., by eliciting and articulating values and beliefs around teaching-learning;
- supporting learners in premise reflection and in
recognizing epistemic, psychic, and sociocultural "distortions" in meaning perspectives;

-supporting and documenting any reformulations in understanding;
-determining if such engagements lead to "reflective action" i.e., do learners "act" on new information?

The efficacy of this process will be considered from the viewpoint of the participants. I asked questions such as these: Do you view their participation in a portfolio process as perspective enhancing or altering? If so, how? If not, why? Do you view the portfolio process as a viable assessment practice that leads to "development?" Are emancipatory interests realized through a portfolio process? Finally, changes in meaning perspectives indicate that transformative learning has resulted from the portfolio process and professional competence has been enhanced.

I used various forms of data-gathering in this study: participant observation of subjects within their teaching environment and during group sessions was one. Pre- and post-surveys, follow-up interviews, textual analysis of written peer responses, responses to reflective activities (See Appendices I, J, K), and portfolio conversations were others. The tools used in data collection serve a dual purpose: they were a means of social research and a device for portfolio construction. Given the limited number of participants in this study (four), I followed the surveys (Appendices C & D) with an interview to clarify the answers and to probe areas of additional interest to this study. I kept a reflective journal which provided a further source of data and permitted insights into the research process and experience as it unfolded.

This study seeks to advance understanding of teacher development as
transformative learning. It considers how meaning structures (understandings) can be culled, critiqued, and changed to allow for exciting new possibilities that are empowering of those who work in educational settings. My interests are praxis-oriented and accord with Mezirow’s view of emancipatory education “as an organized effort to help the learner challenge presuppositions, explore alternative perspectives, transform old ways of understanding and act on new perspectives” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 18). A premise that guides and motivates this project is Lather’s assertion that research should be viewed according to its “catalytic” validity, “the degree to which the research process re-orientis, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it... so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ultimately self-determination through the research participation” (Lather, 1991, p. 68).

This study seeks to contribute to the burgeoning field of portfolio development by considering how transformation theory can inform its development in both policy and practice.

Located at the heart of this study are the same desires articulated by Cynthia: assessment that encourages change, which in turn can lead to personal and professional growth.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter two presents a focused review of the research literature on the use of portfolios whose primary purpose is not summative assessment but in-service supervision that seeks to support teachers’ professional development or to serve as vehicles for learning in a pre- or in-service
context. I undertake this review in order to articulate a concept of portfolios based on transformation theory and to present an organizing framework for the portfolio process, which can be critically employed. In so doing, I articulate how my work differs from and informs current understanding of the use of portfolios for professional development, thereby contributing to the growing dialogue on portfolios.

Chapter three provides demographic information and a detailed description of the methods and procedures used in structuring the portfolio process. Included in this section are the instruments used for generating, recording and analysing data.

In chapter four, I analyze the data collected and present and discuss all findings. The final chapter restates in summary fashion the study’s intentions, methodology and the results. I include practical and theoretical contributions and recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In this chapter, I review traditional forms of teacher assessment, showing how they differ in purpose and form from growth-oriented models, of which the portfolio is an example. Given that the desired outcome of assessment is development, I look at various conceptions of teacher development as a form of inquiry. Then I discuss them in relation to transformative learning as a problem-solving process. I also consider the research on the use of portfolios for promoting professional development of pre- and in-service educators.

Traditional Forms of Evaluation

Currently, evaluation takes one of two forms: summative or formative, with most boards adopting combinations of the two. A summative evaluation involves the administrator observing the teacher and results in a written report that provides a system of feedback for teachers, which is designed to "measure" their competence. Formative assessment is concerned with promoting teacher development. The outcome, according to Clark (1993), is a system of feedback designed to help teachers improve on an ongoing basis. McColskey & Egelson (1993) cite organizational purposes as the single most influential factor served by summative evaluations, while professional growth is encouraged by formative evaluations.

Although summative evaluation may be viewed as serving purposes of accountability and/or administrative needs, the move toward formative evaluation will encourage a dialectical relationship between teacher and
evaluator, whereby both would ideally negotiate areas to observe and future professional growth to plan for. With the introduction of formative types of evaluation, has come an orientation toward evaluation practices that recognize the primacy of practitioner knowledge and the unique and intimate way in which this knowledge is connected to teaching. Additionally, the adoption of formative evaluations (in conjunction with or in addition to summative approaches) signals a significant turn in assessment practices, whereby we begin to see the possibilities for them to promote active teacher development. This reform in evaluation practices is a response to the current understanding of adult learning and development and to the personal and professional needs of a veteran teaching force.

The projected retirement of many in the next five years will lead to significant changes in the teaching population. An actuarial report compiled by Mercer (1996) indicates that 80 percent of teachers have had 15 or more years of service. Thus, the need to rethink assessment for the purposes (and as a means) of supporting on-going teacher development is critical to promoting and sustaining the quality of teaching.

Current strategies in formative approaches support a collaborative, mentor-mentee relationship – one that invites inquiry into and reflection upon teaching practices through the use of videotapes and/or audiotape recordings, analysis of classroom teaching, conferencing, and journal writing, etc. However, no one format supports introspection, while systematically documenting teacher growth, and reflecting changes in thinking and practice over the course of teachers' professional lives. The portfolio process, which I describe more fully later, can capture the rich and varied nuances of the teaching-learning exchange that encompass more than the traditional notions
of the teacher as "manager."

The discourse on traditional forms of teacher assessment frames or constructs the teacher as demonstrating "competence" (as instrumental knowledge) and as being "effective" in his/her teaching performance. This view derives from a behavioural perspective that focuses exclusively on performance and reduces the act of teaching to a selection of means so as to achieve appropriate ends. Although this reductionist approach may be appropriate for making institutional decisions, it disregards the complex, multi-faceted, and non-linear concerns of teachers, and denies the situational factors that impinge on the teaching-learning context.

If, however, the purpose of evaluation is to cultivate professional learning, the teacher must be allowed to assume an active role in the process and to clearly define the parameters. Further to this, evaluation practices dichotomizing educators as "good" and "poor," fail to consider how teachers' instrumental and communicative interests influence curriculum decisions and instruction. If we take knowledge (its nature and structure) as a point of entry into the discussion on teacher evaluation and consider its connection to the curriculum (whose content and delivery become interconnected vis-à-vis the teacher's practical interests), then curriculum decisions are, as Connelly (1989) suggests, informed by a teacher's individual biography, which is "embedded within the social history of schools and schooling" (p. 578).

Therefore, existing practices do not recognize the claims of Elbaz (1991) that "knowledge is constructed, dynamic and changing; ... that the teacher's knowledge grows out of a complex, dialectical relationship with the discursive social matrix that shape it" (p. 5).
Purpose of Evaluation

Despite recent advances in the area of adult learning and development, Gitlin & Smyth (1989) maintain that teacher evaluation practices have remained virtually unchanged in the last twenty years. This entrenchment is attributable, in part, to the purposes such technologies were viewed to serve. Evaluation was based on a "quality-product control" model adopted in the industrial age. Davey (1991) historically traces performance-based assessment to the rapid growth in trade and labour jobs. Then apprentices proved their mastery of a craft through performance, which was often judged by comparing the quality of the product to some established standard.

However, when the primary output being assessed is not a product but is the processes and kinds of learning involved — decisions, actions, interactions, explanations — no single objective standard can be used. As Cranton (1996) suggests, technical interests and instrumental knowledge respond to the human need to "control and manipulate the environment" (p. 17). Teachers may formulate their needs in questions such as these: How can I deal with unwanted student behaviours? Who is the best student in the class? How do I convey the math concepts outlined in the grade two curriculum? Is this an appropriate amount of homework for this grade? The focus in each question is on the content or the process informing the problem. The resolutions, according to Mezirow, lead to changes in meaning schemes, which express our views/values as they relate to the matter in question. In so far as each of the above questions relates to discipline, assessment, instruction, and curriculum, they are concerned with issues of cause and effect, which are amenable to empirical-analytic processes in their determination or resolution. Consequently, viewing educator interests as
being exclusively instrumental, sanctions approaches to teacher learning, development, and assessment being made in terms of purely technical skills.

Distinct, yet not separate, from interests in technical skills are preoccupations with understanding ourselves and what others communicate to us. Such concerns inform our communicative interests. These interests, as Mezirow states involve: “values, feelings, moral decisions, ideals and normative concepts which may be defined only by their contexts, like freedom, love, beauty and justice. Communicative learning is seldom amenable to empirical test” (Mezirow, 1994, p. 225). In contrast with the questions generated by technical interests those developing from communicative interests reveal considerably different concerns. The questions include the following: Why is this student acting in this way? Why do I view students as either good or bad? Why is homework assigned? How do students understand this request/lesson/subject matter? How do students, parents, administrators, colleagues view my teaching? Why does this matter? Such questions probe less the “what” or “how” of an issue and more the “why” or presuppositions behind the views and beliefs which have made something a problem in the first place. Assuming such rhetorical forms, critical reflection focuses on the premise of the problem rather than the actual content or process. The reflection leads to changes in our understanding of self, others, and our personal experiences so significant that our newly acquired insights result in “reflective action.” Communicative interests, as reflected in previous questions, are concerned with understanding, meanings and motives, which cannot be easily framed by a cause-effect relationship. Trying to develop communicative skills involves a learning process that is metaphoric-abductive (discussed later) and requires alternatives to traditional
Traditional approaches fail to take into account the fact that all teaching “performances” need to be viewed as occurring within a unique context, at a particular time, and with specific students. Collins (1990) indicates that the criteria used for one class may not relate to another because of differences among students or grade levels, variation in time of year, and geographic locations. Summative approaches to teacher evaluation take an outside-in approach that consists of classroom visits, once described by a teacher as “commando raids.” My own inquiries indicate that teachers see evaluation as serving bureaucratic purposes, particularly the public need for accountability. They do not view current practices as meaningful or as enhancing or contributing to teacher development or as permitting changes in practices that would enhance the learning environment.

Evaluation that seeks to improve practice and promote teaching excellence has fundamentally different aims than does evaluation done to ensure accountability. I agree with Shulman who views the ethics of the latter as questionable, because all forms of evaluation should promote and inform practice rather than serve as a “filtering mechanism” (Shulman, 1987, p. 44).

A response to the instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory interests of educators, the use of portfolios as a means of assessment that enables professional development comprises two antithetical processes, as practised traditionally. It relates teacher development and assessment dialectically through the element central to both: teacher knowledge as both a technical and a “practical” enterprise. Portfolios seek to explicate the skills, attitudes, and knowledge of the teacher, wherein the skills include, but are
not confined to, the techniques, strategies, tools, materials, management skills – in essence, the orchestration of the “instrumental things” of practice.

Attitudes encompass teacher dispositions, beliefs, values, passions/desires, moral considerations/dimensions, and aesthetic sense, that is, communicative and emancipatory interests. These interests generate specific knowledge forms (with corresponding processes of learning and means of validation) that shape our teaching practice. Portfolios reconstrue evaluation, not as the pinnacle or culmination of teaching and learning, but instead as a vehicle/process through which one learns. In this outlook, evaluation does not act as a filtering mechanism for ineffective educators but informs and supports teaching practices. Although learning is “a social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to action” (Mezirow, 1994, p. 222), traditional forms of evaluation discriminate between what teachers know (content) and how they teach (pedagogy). In contrast, the portfolio process acknowledges and sustains teacher knowing and doing as complementary processes that dialectically inform each the other.

**Portfolios: An Inquiry-oriented Approach to Teacher Development**

Since my emphasis here is on the use of portfolios for personal and professional development, a brief consideration of some viewpoints advocated in the literature on teacher development will inform (and support) the portfolio process. It is to be implemented based on the view of adult learning as being situated in a problem-solving context and as a specific form of inquiry.

Lieberman has written extensively in the area of professional
development. She claims that, traditionally, professional development involves resource personnel doing something to someone. In education, teachers are often perceived as passive recipients and consumers of others' knowledge (generally as university-generated research). "It is still widely accepted that staff learning takes place primarily at a series of workshops, at a conference or with the help of a long-term consultant" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 591). This approach assumes that teachers need to develop or acquire appropriate technical skills to more effectively disseminate the curriculum (as content) to changing populations of students. Such practices hardly posit practitioners as learners and are even less supportive of Aronowitz' and Giroux's (1987) more radical reframing of educators as "intellectuals." In response, Lieberman suggests that "The conventional view of staff development as a transferable package of knowledge to be distributed to teachers in bite-size pieces needs radical rethinking. It implies a limited conception of teacher learning that is out of step with current research and practice" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 591). She also speaks of the contradictions that exist between the transformed views of student learning and its corresponding pedagogy and the traditional approaches to teacher development: "What everyone appears to want for students – a wide variety of learning opportunities that engage students in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems, using their own experiences, and working with others – is for some reason denied to teachers when they are the learners" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 591). Lieberman points to the problem as being the source of the solution – "teachers are learners" and their needs are no less than, and the conditions for their growth no different from, those of the students they teach – thus teaching and learning are mutually-reinforcing
processes. What Lieberman and others (Fullan, 1993; Grimmett and Neufeld, 1994; Cochran & Little, 1993) advocate is development as a form of inquiry motivated by practitioner needs. These I suggest consists of practical, emancipatory, and technical interests. Since interests and requisite forms of knowledge are so intimately connected to one’s meaning structures, this shift in outlook makes the teachers‘ own construals of self, others, and classroom practice a source of their own learning. This development model understands that an examination of the assumptions embedded in beliefs opens them to critique. As well, it affirms that rational dialogue provides teachers with new solutions, interpretations, and understandings. Insights gained through new understandings entail knowing differently and that displacement is development (as opposed to knowing more or merely knowing how).

Exactly how does an inquiry-based orientation to teacher development support teacher learning? The initiating impulse supporting educator inquiry comes out of the long-standing divide between research undertaken to pursue knowledge that seeks to advance theoretical understanding, and inquiry that is motivated by the practical (communicative) interests of practitioners. They seek primarily to effect changes in teaching practices. Research generated outside the immediate interests of practitioners does not involve investments and desires similar to that generated out of their interests. This is the essential characteristic that distinguishes educator inquiry from other forms of social research. The questions practitioners pursue arise from the immediacy of the situational context, and it is through a process of inquiry (individual and collective) that practitioners entertain other possible readings/actions. Jalongo (1991) maintains that a central
motivation for learning, which simultaneously forms a condition necessary for promoting professional growth, is the identification of personal and professional needs. Related to this teachers, rather than administrators and/or institutions, should initiate goal-setting. Fullan (1993) not only underscores this point but highlights the dynamic nature of learning: “inquiry – indicates that formation and enactment of personal purpose are not static matters but, rather, a perennial quest” (p. 13). Educator inquiry is personally motivated, sensitive to context, and changes over time. Questioning is an essential element of learning and sustains self-renewal. The answers practitioners obtained through inquiry are, in large measure, determined by the kinds of questions they ask and the intentions or purposes that prompted their asking.

Germane to inquiry-oriented approaches is reflection; it plays a central role. The work of Donald Schon on reflective practice addresses the importance of distinguishing between practitioners gaining understanding and making changes in practice. He says that the practitioner’s increased understanding of the situational context is motivated by a desire for change and that the ensuing changes recursively feed that understanding. Schon characterizes this process as “reflection-in-action,” action being a vital component in the process as well as the desired outcome, which is equally reflected upon: “reflection tends to focus interactively on the outcomes of action, the action itself and the intuitive knowings implicit in the action” (Schon, cited in Bryant, 1996, p. 115). Mezirow’s (1991) view of reflection as focused on the content, process, and premise of a problem expands Schon’s definition and is particularly useful in explaining the interrelated working of knowledge, reflection, and learning as demonstrated by the questions posed
earlier.

Many of the reflective tools used to guide teacher inquiry seek to demonstrate how the personal is implicated with the professional. An educator’s individual biography is interwoven with and plays out in practice as confirmed by Rudduck, and the “practitioners’ own sense of self is deeply embedded in their teaching” (Rudduck, 1988, p. 208). To this end, the “tools” of reflection (that is, language [in its various symbolizing forms]) procures a distancing from the immediacy of the situation; this distance concretizes and constructs experience. It is through such symbolic forms that our knowing takes shape, even as it shapes our knowing.

Reflection is not the desired end of teacher development efforts, nor does reflection in and of itself lead to changes in teaching practices. Rather, to attain change attention must shift to the structures through which our reflective engagements assume meaning. Language as a sociolinguistic code is the quintessential means for making our reflective acts possible and comprehensible. In other words, we use language to understand situations, events, people, and experiences. Language both enables and constrains understanding because the meanings that inhere in words are both social and personal. “Meaning is public and conventional, the result not of individual intention but of inter-individual intelligibility” (Belsey, 1980, p. 42). Moreover, Belsey suggests that because of language’s transparent nature, we often overlook its mediating effects. Words partake of certain world views and such ways of knowing yield material effects: “... in so far as language is a way of articulating experience, it necessarily participates in ideology, the sum of the ways in which people both live and represent to themselves their relationship to the conditions of their existence” (Belsey, 1980, p. 42).
Language, as a meaning-constituting system, governs what can be known, communicated, and heard: it is impossible, as Gadamer (1975) claims, to separate oneself from the historical and cultural context that defines one's interpretive framework. Thus, reflection involves a (re)presentation of and an inquiry into the teacher's tacit beliefs, and offers a way of penetrating the ingrained familiarity that veils their operative presence so much that they are taken for granted. Scrutinizing these beliefs enhances the practitioner's conscious awareness of how personal, systemic, and larger social and political contexts shape the educational landscape and play out through teaching practices in individual classrooms. If, as Rudduck suggests, the intent of practitioner inquiry and reflection is to "slough off the sediment of socialization... feel more in control of their professional purposes and direction... and gain a clearer sense of the way in which the past shapes and informs possibilities for action in the present" (Rudduck, 1988, p. 210), then such intentions also have emancipatory implications for teachers, classrooms, schools, and the profession. Rudduck's position resonates with Lieberman's view that teacher development as "continuous inquiry into classroom practice" should seek the "development of habits of mind that make it legitimate to ask questions continuously about learning, about students, and about the content of the curriculum" (Lieberman, 1994, p. 23).

According to its many advocates (Shulman, 1989; Bird, 1990; Wheeler, 1993; Murray, 1992; Vartuli & Fyfe, 1993; Wolf, 1991a; Edgerton et al., 1991) the portfolio is viewed as a way to "improve teaching practices." In this study I ask if the portfolio process can serve as a mechanism to support teachers, who are viewed by Fullan as active learners "who continuously seek, assess, apply and communicate knowledge as reflective practitioners" (Fullan, 1993, p. 16).
Numerous writers have documented evidence of the effectiveness of portfolios in contributing to teachers' professional development (Wolf et al., 1995; Jaeger & Thompson, 1994; Athanases, 1994). At this time, Wolf points to the absence of strong research-based results to substantiate the claim that the process of portfolio construction enhances practice: "the professional literature on both student and teacher portfolios is rich in rhetoric, but slender in empirical evidence" (Wolf et al., 1995, p. 33). The existence of this disparity is not surprising given the divergent views regarding what "improved teaching practices" mean and the lack of clarity on approaches for promoting and ascertaining such development vis-à-vis the forms and processes of knowledge acquisition and adult learning.

For the purposes of this study, I will use the term "improved" to mean that practices yield evidence of transformed understanding, or as described by Short and Burke, a "shift in viewing curriculum, students, learning, and teaching" (Short & Burke, 1996, p. 97). At the same time I concur with Short and Burke who point out that "The use of the term 'improve' or, for that matter 'change' implies a deficit view of teaching – [and] it is not suggested that teachers must make changes in their thinking or teaching because there is something wrong with it, rather, that 'change' is the result of continuous inquiry" (Short & Burke, p. 102). Development results from transformations in understanding, which are associated with learning. One undergoes the process throughout life. As a result of transformations practices can be changed and thus "improved."

How, then, do we support the development of this type of practitioner? Portfolios as an inquiry-oriented approach to teacher development provide an excellent mean for supporting educator inquiry; they do so by "engaging
teachers and teachers-in-development in the practice of documenting and reflecting on their teaching, and in holding regular and focused conversations with their colleagues about their practice" (Wolf et al., 1995, p. 37). Two elements essential to include in portfolio process are reflection and collaborative interaction. Since our learning is not always of a conscious nature, reflection is consciousness-forming and, if learning is to occur, is thus a precondition. Secondly, learning does not occur in a vacuum; shifts in understanding often require a catalyst. Group deliberation by way of portfolio conferences can fulfill this condition. Professional development efforts must support practitioner knowledge and pedagogy, not as a "banking" enterprise but as "knowing differently rather than [in terms of] cumulative increase" (Usher, 1996, p. 19). Consequently, development as a reflective process of inquiry does not involve the acquisition of knowledge per se but a transformation in one's understanding of self, others, and, contexts. This occurs when "Teachers take pains to stretch themselves dutifully to address the vexing questions and perplexing dilemmas inherent in the daily messiness of practice" (Grimmett & Neufeld, 1994, p. 230).

Theoretical underpinnings of portfolios as transformative learning resonate with inquiry-based approaches to learning as founded on social constructivist epistemologies of adult development. If knowledge is historically situated, socially shaped, and intersected by personal biography, then development and support of teacher learning must tap into personal and socially influenced understandings. The reflective component of portfolios seek to assist teachers with describing, defining, and reviewing aspects of experience and practice; it helps them make visible the assumptions that undergird their beliefs. The artifacts that practitioners collect, select, and
reflect upon are concretizations, a textualization, in other words a giving of form and substance to otherwise-ephemeral moments in teaching. The spontaneous, moment-to-moment character of teaching may be difficult, if not impossible, to capture, textual forms that precede and emerge within and from our teaching-learning engagements can be used. Portfolio “texts” (loosely defined as any form of symbolization) may include journal entries, lesson plans, student evaluations, notes to a parent, video- or audio- tapes of lessons, photo essays, poems, drawings, dance and musical compositions, etc. Most of the literature related to portfolios deals with the conceptual and practical aspects of their construction few studies, however, consider the portfolio process’s potential for development. No study has undertaken an approach to portfolio development as transformative learning. Because portfolio artifacts and texts can be read and interpreted as instantiations of personal and socio-cultural perspectives, discourse and narrative analysis can be used to analyze the compiled artifacts, taped interviews, and portfolio conversations. These artifacts, in part, “formulate responses to our questions, express our individuality, connect past with present and future and make the abstract more concrete” (Jalongo, 1991, p. 7).

Portfolio use for teacher development
Portfolios have long been used in other fields, particularly in the arts, as a means of documenting skills and achievements. But their use for assessment purposes is less well known and documented. This application only recently surfaced in an academic and professional milieu and, unsurprisingly, within the research literature.

Although the specific form the portfolio can assume will vary
considerably, as will the selection of the content, basic to all portfolios is their ability to provide insights over a period of time into the scope and breadth of an individual's knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Integral to the concept of portfolios is Clark's idea that "what teachers do in their profession cannot be explained in simple terms. The act of teaching is too complex and integrated into a teacher's actions to be easily quantified and then systematically measured" (Clark, 1993, p. 21).

Interest in the use of portfolios as an alternate form of assessment appeared in the literature during the late 1980s in works that reflected their use by teachers in the classroom to assess students. Now the use of teacher portfolios is gaining increased attention, as teacher educators in pre- and in-service teacher education programs implement it on various campuses. They are also used to examine early teaching experiences and to stimulate reflective practice (Berry et al., 1991), and to make decisions related to promotion and tenure and to improve college and university teaching (Seldin, 1991). School boards use portfolios as part of a teacher-evaluation system (Tierney, 1993), and as a means of supporting professional development (Graham, 1993). The literature on portfolios documents their use primarily for purposes of assessment. The use of portfolios in promoting development for preservice (Winsor & Ellefson, 1995) and in-service (Athanases, 1994) teachers is not widely practiced.

While this study focuses exclusively on the potential of portfolios to support the development of practicing educators, I will also consider their use in monitoring and promoting professional development in in-service teacher education programs. Brogan (1995) makes a distinction between portfolio use for prospective and practicing teachers. He says that prospective teachers’
"portfolios are used to document a teacher candidate's capability." Brogan notes that portfolios are used for practicing teachers to "document the tendencies of teachers to act in capable ways." This distinction highlights how views of teaching both as a technical skill (capability) and for organizational purposes (as distinct from those of educators) shape portfolio construction. It is my view, however, that all portfolio experiences should support the tendencies of teachers to act in "enabling" ways, that is, "to achieve a broader, more discriminating, permeable and integrative understanding of his/her experience as a guide to action" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 226). While individual needs vary given each teacher's experience, assignment, and professional aspirations etc. my stance is that instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory interests are representative of learners generally. The conception of the portfolio I advocate is applicable to all educators whose process of development and learning is on-going.

Since the conception of portfolios advocated in this study uses transformation theory as a framework in its articulation I examined that area. The following questions guided my reading: What is teacher development/growth? What forms of knowledge are viewed as relevant to educator development? How, if at all, is this connected to or does it take into account views of adult learning and development as transformation? How is development ascertained? What are the conditions for development? How does portfolio construction support these conditions?

A study undertaken by Athanases in connection with the Teacher Assessment Project at Stanford provides insights to teacher development using portfolios. He worked with a group of elementary school-teachers (ranging in experience between 1 to more than 15 years) who maintained a
portfolio of their literacy teaching with a view to understanding its effects. The study resulted indicate that the collection and construction of instructional artifacts, in combination with opportunities for social interaction and collegial dialogue, promoted teacher reflection. This in turn "formed the foundation for the teacher's growth" (Athanases, 1994, p. 421). He viewed growth was viewed in terms of changes in teaching and thinking in the pedagogical, cognitive, affective, social, and pragmatic domains. Additionally, he identified three sources of teacher growth in the characterization of the portfolio as artifact: display of teaching, reflection, and social interaction. Athanases deems the results from this study as "tentative" and suggests that further research into the sources of teacher growth and the use of portfolios as a means of professional development should be conducted.

In Athanases' study, portfolio construction specified instructional approaches that teachers were to use with respect to student assessment and literacy. He examined changes in teachers' assessment of students and in their planning and adapting of literature-based language arts instruction. Despite these specifications, it appears that "teachers reported valuing of the project's emphasis on these challenging areas of teaching" (Athanases, 1994, p. 435). To redress this "manufacturing of consent" Athanases asks, "what are the differential effects of asking teachers to document what they already do versus specifying instructional approaches that match current innovations in teaching?" (Athanases, 1994, p. 437)

The portfolio construction process that I advocate varies significantly in this regard; its operating premise acknowledges learner interests and knowledges as a significant factor contributing to portfolio construction both
as content and process. It also recognizes learning as being embedded in a "problem-posing" context and inquiry as an active agent in adult development and a major source of teacher growth. In this study the portfolio process is motivated by the expressed interests and needs of the practitioner and the focus for inquiry is teacher-determined, arising from questions, problems, and issues related to practice. To implement a literature-based approach to language instruction is not merely to have the premise confirmed: changes in thinking and related pedagogy in using literature in promoting language, suggest changes in meaning schemes which, according to Mezirow, is an "everyday phenomenon."6 I suspect that educators' reflections, in Athanases' study, were focused on the content and/or the processes of their understandings of practice as related to literacy and assessment. Critical premise reflection would have engaged responses to questions such as: What is literacy? What is literate behaviour? Describe your experiences related to literacy and how does this influence your thinking and teaching? How do parental, board and provincial views and expectations influence your teaching of literacy? How does provincial assessment affect this? What commercial reading program is used in your class/school – does this reflect current understanding of children's language development? How do such programs impact on your teaching? These kinds of questions signal a fundamentally different way of approaching literacy: it signals a view of it as existing in the tacit theories, experiences, and attitudes already operative as habits of practice. By extension, they indicate how a portfolio process can support the interrogation of teacher assumptions and ideologies (constituted

6 I do not take issue with literature-based approaches to language development but question its designated use by the researcher as well as his overall approach. Inviting teachers to explore the sources and consequences of their understanding, to make explicit their assumptions and to form new determinations, is central to viewing learning and development as transformation.
as social, political and biographical products) and consequently produce transformative changes in understanding and interpretation. It is apparent that changes resulted, not from the research program’s emphasis, but from the insights practitioners gained through new understandings that revealed concepts for what they are – cultural artifacts.

Furthermore, Athanases reports that portfolio construction “promoted teachers’ reflection, which formed the foundation for the teachers’ growth” (Athanases, 1994, p. 421). How reflection actually leads to development (as changes in thinking and practice) remains elusive and evades explanation in Athanases’ study. I believe that Mezirow’s distinction between reflection as focused on content, process, and premise may move us further answering Athanases’ question: “To what degree must structured reflection accompany the portfolio as a collection of artifacts?” (p. 437) It is equally of interest to this study. Posing yet another question, Athanases asks “How much interaction is needed to ensure positive effects of the portfolio construction process?” (p. 437) Rather than focusing on the extent, I focus on the nature of the interaction and the role colleagues and researchers play in establishing a dialogic community in which perspectives are voiced, validated, and negated in “rational discourse.” What Athanases’ findings suggest, and this study seeks to ascertain, is the potential of portfolios to support transformations in understanding that, in turn, result in altered habits of practice and enhanced communicative competence.

In addition to supporting the value of critical reflection, the portfolio literature highlights the importance of collegial dialogue as an important element in advancing educator development. Wolf et al., (1995) write about the focus and content of “portfolio conversations” in the professional
development of both teachers and teachers-in-development. Such conversations should "allow teachers to explore challenging issues of practice" and they suggest strategies that serve to make this so. Wolf cites Barnes and Dyson to support the value of "exploratory talk in deepening our understanding of concepts" (Wolf et al., 1995, p. 32). I also consider that such talk is integral to concept formation and essential to human communication and learning. In so far as it pertains to transformation theory, Mezirow defines discourse as a "special kind of dialogue in which we focus on content and attempt to justify beliefs by giving and defending reasons and by examining the evidence for and against competing viewpoints" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 225). A view of dialogue as rational discourse is particularly germane to communicative learning since trying to understand what someone means involves "values, intentions, feelings, moral decisions, ideals, and normative concepts which may be defined only by their contexts, like freedom, love, beauty, and justice" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 225). Such learning defies empirical testing – we determine the "validity" as opposed to the "truth" of a claim based on the justifications for our beliefs. Through talk and/or texts our beliefs are exposed and through critical, "rational" discourse our views are subject to review, revision or validation by both self and others. In this way, practitioner interests create a learning community sustained by professional discourse in which accepted norms and standards of practice are critiqued and potentially new realities are entertained.

To return to the questions that focused my reading of portfolio research I next examine the purpose of an assessment that seeks development. From reviewing the literature it would appear that many seek to "improve practice" (Wolf et al., 1995). Suggestions on how to do this via the use of
portfolios often vary yet each researcher emphasizes the importance of reflection and collegial dialogue in promoting development. Researchers view practitioner's reflective capacities as being enhanced through the portfolio process (Athanases, 1994; Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991). I agree with Lieberman (1995) that efforts at development should be aimed at challenging unquestioned habits of practice, and promoting generative pedagogies (Masciale, 1996) that establish democratic learning environments for students and teachers alike. It is important to support teachers in developing more enabling, integrative and permeable ways of interpreting and understanding self, others, and experience (i.e., more inclusive meaning perspectives).

Critical reflection and dialogue are vehicles through which communicative competence is fostered, professional communities are forged, and teaching practices are not only improved but emancipated. While enhanced reflexivity may result from a portfolio process reflection, in and of itself, does not lead to transformative learning, which should be the principal focus of efforts aimed at teacher development. Reflection figures prominently in the portfolio literature and is accorded a significant role in adult learning and development. A variety of approaches are described in order to promote its development: peer mentoring, conferencing, collegial interaction, selection and reflection on portfolio artifacts, journal writing, and audio and video taping of teaching, to name only a few. I view listening, observing, speaking, reading, and writing as communicative modalities - a means of dialogue with self and others. They are reflexive forms that allow a "bending," which looks back at the sources and consequences of existing understandings and that can act potentially as sources for exploring new meanings, thereby transforming our knowing.
My view of communicative modalities [dialogue (listening, observing, and speaking) and texts (reading and writing)] as reflexive media is substantiated by a doctoral study undertaken by Masciale (1996) that explores the use of teaching portfolios as structures through which student teachers used listening, speaking, writing, and reading to "redefine existing educational paradigms." As stated earlier, while dialogue is viewed as essential in establishing collegial relations and professional communities, viewed from the perspective of transformation theory, such dialogue (as a form of "languaging") is essential to knowing and basic to establishing the validity of our claims. Through dialogue we voice our beliefs and subject them to review, inspection, and revision, especially when our justifications and beliefs are no longer valid and are found to be restrictive; through critical discourse and group deliberation new understandings are always possible. The desire for enhanced understandings establishes a professional community that can effectively change the established norms and accepted standards. Thus portfolios can create a discursive space in which collegiality and collaboration invite teachers to develop more inclusive frames. These would create more enabling learning environments and set new standards for the profession beyond the mere acquisition of a demonstrated competence in instrumental knowledge. Such collegial conversations are deemed by Edgerton (1991) to generate learning communities that sustain a culture of professionalism.

Terry and Eade's description of a portfolio process raises a number of question related to reflection. The University of West Florida used it and the Florida State Board of Education mandated its use for beginning teachers. The writers present a portfolio model for the professional development of
“teaching competence;” it involves three stages within a cycle. They state that the “portfolio approach has proven to be a useful tool for facilitating professional development of both pre- and in-service teachers” (Terry & Eade, 1983, p. 7). The competencies, which are a central focus in this process, are not directly specified other than as being a set of ten “essential/generic” competency statements. Teachers use these statements to analyze strengths and needs, and subsequently document and demonstrate their competence through the portfolio process. We are left to speculate as to whether or not these “competencies” account for and support development of communicative interests and requisite knowledge. Similarly, demonstrated skill in this may or may not be indicative of professional growth. Of notable significance was the authors’ lack of reference to the importance of reflection and its role in teacher learning and development – elements viewed as critical in transformation theory and essential to the portfolio process advocated here.

In another study in pre-service education (Jensen & Shepston, 1994) portfolios were combined with professional development plans. The portfolios that emerged reflected students’ ability to document the achievement of self-selected goals and to provide relevant supporting materials. They also helped to produce accurate assessments of their work and clearly articulated reflections regarding their progress and growth. The self-selection of goals in this portfolio construction underscores the importance of learner interest and needs as basic to adult learning. Growth is ascertained relative to the documented achievement of individually identified goals rather than to critical reflection on presuppositions that undergird beliefs. Interrogation of learner beliefs invites transformations in
understanding. The learning that results can significantly alter practice – or so this study seeks to ascertain.

Winsor and Ellefson (1995) used portfolios to monitor and document the professional development of student teachers. The authors viewed this as a process of “self-evaluation through reflection on practice and beliefs [as] a critical foundation for continuous professional growth” (Winsor & Ellefson, 1995, p. 6). Their work leads them to conclude that portfolios possess great “promise in fostering self-evaluation and reflection leading to professional development” (p. 7). Despite the important role assigned to reflection, (including goal-setting, collaborative evaluation and dialogue) the study provides no clear understanding as to how reflection is connected to learning that leads to professional development. I feel that transformation theory supplies the missing links whereby critical premise reflection leads to development as changes in meaning structures. Three of the six categories listed for portfolio contents by Winsor and Ellefson (teaching competencies, knowledge of child development and learning processes, and content knowledge of one or more subject areas) suggest that student “monitoring of growth” is in the acquisition and demonstration of teaching competencies as technical knowledge, almost to the exclusion of communicative and emancipatory interests.

Speaking from a personal perspective as an educator and using teacher testimony as to the effectiveness of portfolios as a vehicle for professional renewal, Pynkoski (1996) cites her increased ability to program for the individual needs of her ESL students as evidence of her professional growth. As a consequence of working collaboratively with a colleague to establish “a planned outcome of professional development, selected indicators of
achievement of the planned outcome," her self-confidence and self-esteem were considerably enhanced. She envisaged the portfolio as fostering professionalism, collaborative working relationships, teacher empowerment, and student achievement. Reflection plays a central role in her work and it is through this “process of documenting opinion (reflection on beliefs), rationalization (premise reflection/critical discourse), judgment (transformation of understanding), and discovery (search for new meanings), the teacher's basic beliefs are valued, the teacher is esteemed, and the profession is respected” (Pynkoski, 1996, p. 42). The text inserted inter alia, corroborates my reading of Pynkoski as it relates to a conception of portfolios as a means of transformative learning and her findings (based on personal experience) support the view of portfolios advocated here, as well as indicating their efficacy in promoting teacher development.

In Making the case for teacher portfolios, a position paper, Brogan (1995) reiterates the essential contention that runs through all the literature in the use of portfolios, that no other form can better capture, support, document, and describe the different forms of knowledge that inform teaching practice. Since the most extensive work on portfolios has been produced in Stanford University under the direction of Lee Shulman, it is his work on teacher knowledge, specifically, “pedagogical content knowledge," that is cited and used to conceptualize portfolios. Teacher's pedagogical content knowledge is described as a “kind of knowledge [that] represents the teachers's unique transformation of content (subject matter knowledge) into forms learners can understand, using instructional strategies and knowledge of ‘what works’ (pedagogical knowledge) given the needs of particular students and the domain” (Vavrus & Collins, 1991, p. 16). Instrumental knowledge is indeed
important to teaching as a technical skill; however, Shulman’s conception does not account for educators’ communicative and emancipatory interests. Furthermore, essential to communicative learning is the need to reflect on practice that is embedded in personal experience and that influence knowing and doing in ways that are veiled. Calling past experiences into critical awareness is vital to “understanding” practice, not only as a means of improving the delivery of subject matter content to ever-changing student populations, but also of gaining freedom from constraining interpretations and distortions. This recall allows us to acquire more enabling, permeable frames through which to understand self, others and personal life experiences. This is the trajectory of teacher’s communicative and emancipatory interests. Additionally, the proof (process of verification) of instrumental knowledge relies on hypothetical-deductive modes of reasoning while communicative forms rely on the “metaphorical-abductive.” Thus, while goal-setting and its achievement may be a suitable determinant for gauging acquisition of instrumental knowledge (such as pedagogical content knowledge), it becomes more problematic to use it with respect to communicative interests (understanding oneself and one’s experiences and their related significance to practice).

In her dissertation, Lucid (1997) attempts to identify and describe types of growth-oriented teacher assessment practices to determine their impact on teachers’ personal and professional growth, collegial interaction, and job performance. The portfolio is one. Her findings, admittedly inconclusive given the limited scope of the study (five schools), reveal that portfolios were in limited use and had moderate impact on growth, collegial interaction, and job performance. The author suggests incorporating portfolios and peer
coaching in professional development plans. Teachers reported the "benefits of engaging in peer interactions (rather) than in developing goals as part of a professional development plan" (Lucid, 1997, p. 199). From the perspective of transformative learning, collegial interaction is important because individual perspectives are voiced, reviewed, revised, or validated, and a forum is created through which converging and diverging viewpoints are heard. Group deliberation, through critical discourse generated new understandings and norms, once reified by institutional practices, but now are subject to revision.

Graham (1993) conducted a study that looked at how teachers understand, experience, and respond to the implementation of a professional portfolio policy in a school district in Canada. She claims that portfolios "demonstrate growth and development in technical aspects of writing and teaching, but they also contribute to the development of self-evaluation and critical reflection" (Graham, 1993, Report No. CS 213 741). Results from this study indicate that reflection and self-evaluation are skills that can be progressively developed; moreover, according to Masciale, they can become a habit, attitude, or posture. Critical reflection and self-evaluation serve as vehicles through which beliefs are revealed, sources and consequences of distortions in suppositions are determined, and more inclusive meaning perspectives can be achieved. This should be the focus guiding assessment practices aimed at teacher development.

Masciale (1996) used portfolios with student teachers to provide "structures" or "reflective frameworks through which students conceptualize professional selves and practices" (Masciale, 1996/1997, Abstract No. 4701). Students explored the role of language and personal experience in shaping
how and what they know about classroom understandings. The portfolio process engaged students in “selecting, re-constructing and interpreting moments which mark their developing awareness of professional roles and responsibilities” (Masciale, Abstract No. 4701). In the process of writing, student-teachers “negotiate emerging definitions of professional ‘knowledge’” (Masciale, Abstract No. 4701) viewed as situated, partial and interactive. Adducing to the lack of a coherent knowledge base and to the need to define and reveal the responsibilities and skills unique to the teaching profession, Masciale views “knowledge [as] actually produced by and among participants of a classroom (1996, p. 22). This interactive and socially constituted notion of knowledge stands in sharp contrast to Shulman’s notion of pedagogical knowledge. (As stated earlier, because most of the research on portfolios is generated by Stanford University it is Shulman’s articulation of knowledge that informs its conceptualization and construction.) Furthermore, Masciale suggests that rather being preoccupied with students (or practicing educators) acquiring and demonstrating an “adequate knowledge base in the syntax and substance of their disciplines” we should concern ourselves with the “study of language [as] our source for ways of looking at learning processes” (Masciale, 1996, p. 29). She highlights the importance of language and its critique as fundamental to teacher education (including on-going development), and this emphasis resonates with transformation theory, which views language as a sociolinguistic meaning perspective serving to filter understandings of experience so as to construe meaning. According to Mezirow (1991) “reality is prestructured by our linguistic symbol systems... statements are not merely about objects or events but are complex utterances governed by rules that rely on implicit norms or standards... uncovering the
political (cultural) suppositions inherent in language” (pp. 58-59). Education, development, and assessment should be about this. Masciale attempts to highlight through a portfolio process the constitutive effects of “languageing”—whereby students “consciously come to see knowledge as an object of discourse” (1996, p. 36). Referencing the work of Barritt, who draws from a phenomenological tradition and specifically the works of Merleau-Ponty, Masciale asserts the prominence of language in thought formation. She writes “language doesn’t mediate experience; it is whole with experience” (Barritt, cited in Masciale, p. 192). Assuming a central role in our understandings of self and our world, language (sociolinguistic structures) shapes what and how we know. More importantly, as articulated in transformation theory, our awareness that words construct meanings reflecting social norms and cultural understandings, which we subsequently experience as corresponding with an objective, immutable reality, and about which we can, through a reflective process, de- and reconstruct meaning perspectives, that make possible new and enabling realities. In transformation theory, epistemic and psychological meaning structures, as well as language (sociolinguistic), are viewed as equally influential in shaping our effort at meaning-making. These dimensions are not considered in Masciale’s study, at least not directly. The reflective tools I plan to use to prompt critical premise reflection will consider each of these structures as they inform participant’s meaning perspectives. They are also used in the description and analysis of the data.

Citing Shirley Brice Heath, Masciale suggests that having “theories” about practices serves to make them “generative.” I maintain that educators’ meaning perspectives implicitly maintain such theories (often operating
tacitly) and that it is through critical premise reflection – that new understandings emerge. Acting on these insights is what makes practices "generative." Like Masciale, I attempt to understand how portfolios "can help to revise our visions of teaching and our roles as members of professional communities" (1996, p. 81) where revision is encouraged through critical reflection on premises. It is the transformation of our socially shaped visions and roles that permits redefinitions of self, teaching, and the profession as sustained through critical discourse. Masciale used portfolio construction to create a community of teachers supported by a "writing- (and talking-/reading-) to-learn" environment. Referencing the work of Camp with the Arts PROPEL project (Camp & Levine cited in Masciale), Masciale views reflection as the centerpiece of the portfolio process, "maybe reflection is what’s most important in portfolios" (1996, p. 130) each of the studies reviewed also expressed this sentiment.

In structuring a portfolio process that seeks to develop "a pedagogy of reflective conversation and writing" (p. 35) student teachers in Masciale’s study constructed narratives of themselves as teachers. Relative to the conception of portfolios that I advocate, the writing of educational narratives and personal philosophies serve to elicit beliefs, which are subsequently held up for critical review. Through discourse they are revised and discarded for more enabling perspectives. I view this as vital to on-going teacher learning. According to Mezirow (1991), it is the essence of adult development: "... transformation can lead developmentally toward a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective and that... is what development means in adulthood. It should be clear that a strong case can be made for calling perspective transformation the central process of adult
development” (p. 155). I agree with Masciale (1996) that “portfolios in many ways embody the means by which we explore and develop our own systems for constructing --and mediating -- authorities, and they offer structures through which we can begin to become capable critics of authority – our own and that of others” (p. 93). Findings from her study clearly support a view of portfolios as transformative learning. They also demonstrate the portfolios’ ability to enhance communicative competence, which Bowers describes as “the individual’s ability to negotiate meanings and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others” (Bowers, cited in Mezirow, 1990, p. 355).

Masciale draws from the work of Vygotsky to explain the process of conceptual learning that one student, Jane, undergoes; this resonates with the concept of meaning structures identified by Mezirow. As well, there is a recognition that such structures are embedded not only in personal histories and social contexts whereby “sophisticated mental structures are used to form concepts of her (Jane’s) classroom “identity” or “authority” but arise through social interaction” (Masciale, 1996, p. 155). Going on to explain that, “conceptual learning occurs through processes whereby words, first understood as referential and linked directly to concrete objects and situations, then become separated or freed from those objects and situations and the new conceptual structures (i.e., meaning perspectives) form as the learner becomes capable of this ‘freeing’” (Masciale, p. 155). Exactly how this “freeing” occurs and how new conceptual structures are generated is not clearly articulated. Masciale also describes how “Jane identifies “great teaching” in particular lived instances and how this begins the process of extracting principles from the particularities” based on the readings and
immediate experiences within the pre-service classroom environment and through portfolio construction.

Based on my understanding of transformation theory what Masciale describes is how “words” – “symbolic models” use the metaphorical-abductive logic required of communicative learning (making meaning of her lived classroom experience) to abductively arrive at principles. These are Jane's own and those she encounters in her readings. Further to this, it is through the critical reflection on presuppositions embedded in “mental structures” and critical dialogue, that revision/transformation in conceptual structures are possible. It is in this way that meanings (not words) are freed, conceptual structures transformed, and new understandings emerge. Transformation theory provides a conceptual framework that explains how such a process occurs and what motivates this movement in the first place. It asserts that when existing meaning structures no longer account for or fit the situational context, they are experienced as "disorienting dilemmas." Maxine Greene uses the term “dislocations,” “moments when the recipes [the learner] has inherited for solving problems no longer seem to work” (Greene, cited in Mezirow, 1991, p. 197). The learner initiates a search for new perspectives that will integrate the new experiences and help him/her to better understand self, others and the life world.

Furthermore, Masciale adopts Vygotsky’s distinction between “spontaneous and scientific” concepts, whereby the former can be likened to meaning schemes while the latter manifest an affinity with meaning perspectives which are described by Vygotsky as “higher mental functions’ which... require deliberate inspection and use” (Vygotsky, cited in Masciale, p. 155). Through talk and text, Masciale structures the portfolio process so as

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to support students' "deliberate inspection" of scientific concepts and their connection to spontaneous concepts which arise from reflections on our daily lived experience. Using similar strategies this study equally engages teachers to look at spontaneous and scientific concepts as "habits of expectation."

Masciale views writing as the "crucial intellectual tool" in which students "can generate more conscious and more conceptualized decisions about how to become a classroom authority" (p. 157). Mezirow (1991) holds that metaphors are the tool of communicative learning whose workings, as described earlier, are analogical, – that we interpret new experiences against what we already know in the form of "meaning-schemes, theories, belief systems, self-concept" (p. 80). She also asserts that "the process of learning (vis-à-vis problem-solving) in the communicative domain involves identification and validation of explanatory constructs" (p. 83). Mezirow cites Schon to describe their importance this way:

metaphor [is] central to the task of accounting for our perspectives on the world: how we think about things, make sense of reality, and set the problems we later try to solve. In this second sense, 'metaphor' refers both to a certain kind of product – a perspective or frame, a way of looking at things – and a certain kind of process – a process by which new perspectives on the world come into existence (Schon, cited in Mezirow, 1994, p. 81).

I propose a definition of portfolios based on Schon's understanding of metaphor: a portfolio as a product can be seen to refer both to its structure, whose contents are cultural artifacts that manifest meaning perspectives, and to the process through which such meanings are reviewed, revised, and transformed. Thus the portfolio is not a static container but a structure of

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7 Literature points out the overemphasis placed on writing and how this may disadvantage those whose strengths are manifest in other forms of communication that are not written.
meanings and a process in a state of constant formation and reformation.

As part of the portfolio requirement for the "ProSem" course, students were to undertake research in an area that emerged "from unresolved questions about our profession" (Masciale, p. 128). Since learning arises in a problem-solving context and inquiry is basic to this process (specifically as it relates to transformation theory), this too, forms a central component in the conception of portfolios I advocate. In writing about the use of teacher research as part of the portfolio requirement, Masciale maintains that the portfolio process allows for the forging or connection of the concrete, or particular lived, experience and the abstract; the process is metaphorical-abductive, and essential to communicative learning. Thus, an ability to articulate the specifics in light of, or as informed by, theoretical understandings of teaching and learning, is a desirable skill cultivated by reflection. The tool for promoting communicative competence involves both hypothesis and metaphor; however, as delineated earlier, the former has been the exclusive focus in teacher development and assessment practices.

The issue of classroom control, the focus for Jane's research, is also pursued by Debbie, a participant in this study. Moreover, her portfolio experience forms the basis of this study's analysis; I extended the basis by using the contributions and reflections of the other participants.

Masciale describes Jane's progress (through her listening and act of writing) toward more "conscious and conceptualized representations of

8 In addition to the completion of a research project, students were to include the following: reflective writing that included the student's philosophy and resulting goals identified for the portfolio, self-evaluative statement. The selection and presentation of other portfolio contents include "Teaching and observation," "Teacher preparation materials," which essentially involve preparation of a unit and lesson plan, and "Literary criticism" - a critical essay on a course selected novel. Finally, the "Creative writing" component required an original piece of fiction/non-fiction. For details see Masciale, 1996, p. 128.
herself as teacher" (1996, p. 160). I seek through examining the portfolio process to provide a forum in which practicing teachers use communicative modalities to make "conscious and conceptualized representations" of themselves as developing professionals whose skills include intellectual as well as communicative competencies.

Identifying reflective writing as a source of growth, Masciale also acknowledged the "sharing of ideas" as a source for the development of knowledge. While the exact workings of this process evade explanation, transformation theory provides us with the conceptual links needed. In communicative learning openness to other perspectives is critical in the problem-solving process of trying to understand:

so that a learner becomes reflective or critically reflective [and] in the course of [this] interpretive activity the learner must view an experience in terms of a conceptual framework or meaning scheme different from that in which it was originally understood as meaningful. Making new meaning in this situation occurs through the creation of new meaning schemes or the modification of old ones (Mezirow, 1991, p. 85).

What this implies is that portfolio conversations (including those held vicariously with authors vis-à-vis their texts) create a space wherein others' perspectives can serve as catalysts to prompt our reflections. Our need to understand others opens us (or should ideally) to others' viewpoints. The sharing of experiences modifies our understanding. Masciale feels Jane is unable to progress in this area because she continues to view the classroom, students, and her role as teacher from the perspective of a student, as forged by her many years of schooling. Jane's "performance" as a teacher derives from, as Dan Lortie suggests, her years of "apprenticeship of observation."
She ultimately recreates these classrooms from a student's perspective (Masciale, p. 166). What is most significant (for the purposes of this study) in this example is the need to question past learning experiences, expectations, and classroom images in order to determine how they influence thinking and practices. This consequently elicits educational narratives which serve to make visible, the beliefs and values that shape our understandings and limit our practices. Equally significant is the need to provide opportunities that invite teachers to view the classroom from alternate perspectives. To this end, I asked participants in this study to consider their classrooms from different perspectives and to include vested interests in the viewpoints, which inform and constrain teaching practices. While these and other reflective tools may have served to "help Jane construct her own authority as her own" (Masciale, p. 161) I join Masciale as she asks, how can the portfolio process help teachers to construct their own authority, not only as novices, but as developing professionals whose competencies are not exclusively instrumental, but also communicative in nature? What reflective tools can be used to support teachers' reflections on contents, processes, and especially premises that support development of communicative competence?

While Masciale details the benefits and difficulties encountered in her use of a portfolio process she maintains that "ProSem portfolios complicate the professional preparedness of my students and me as they reveal the extent of teachers' readiness or willingness to engage in, critique, and reform the intersubjective struggle that characterizes our professional growth" (Masciale, p. 187). This intersubjective struggle is experienced when ways of viewing and being, in the form of cultural recipes, no longer integrate with our experiences. This impels us to search for more inclusive, enabling frames;
pursuing this is the source of our learning and results in personal and professional growth. This is at the heart of transformation theory. In rethinking assessment as transformative learning, I view development as resulting from transformed understanding, which emerges through a process of critical reflection, dialogue and inquiry. Adult learning is essentially a problem-posing enterprise whereby the familiar is rendered problematic. In speaking of the benefits of teacher research, which is essentially a form of inquiry, Masciale states: “when the process of intellectual and social inquiry are linked to meaningful communication, our dialogue can become potentially transformative — of ourselves, of classrooms, of professional attitudes, or professional institutions”(Masciale, p, 206). This is the essence of transformative learning, and “this is what development means in adulthood” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 155). This premise informs my own articulation of the nature of portfolios, and I discuss it as I consider methodological issues in the following chapter. I feel that a portfolio process can “recreate transformative professional directions” through a transformative approach to learning, development, and assessment. In light of the Masciale’s research findings, the portfolio process appears promising in its ability to sustain transformative learning and the development of communicative competence.

In another study, whose findings are significant to this work, Mills-Courts and Amiran (1991) write of the efficacy of portfolios in sustaining “development” as opposed to “criterion or norm-referenced competence in subject area.” The study examined student teachers in the general education program at the State University of New York College. Essentially researchers adopted a portfolio approach to enhance analytical and reflective thinking in
students. They used the process to develop metacognitive skills so that students were “aware of how they ‘do’ intellectual work” (Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991, p. 102). Presented as a solution to a problem, the portfolio was used to promote students’ awareness of their own learning process and the assumptions informing both this process and its content. From the viewpoint of transformation theory their interests are located in the area of epistemic structures whose “distortions are derived from perspectives held over from earlier developmental stages; cognitive, learning, and intelligence styles; narrow scope of awareness; inappropriate use of global/detail focus or concrete/abstract thinking; emphasis on entropy and linear time; and others” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 144). The “and others” that completes the above quote can be filled in by findings identified by Mills-Courts and Amiran; “we found them (students in the GCP program) to be too disengaged and passive to use information in analytical, creative, and productive ways” (Mills-Courts & Amiran, p. 102). Although the writers acknowledge the central role of “critical thinking,” their view of it is perplexing: “This (critical thinking) is the thought process that comes into play when “you can do what you’ve supposedly learned” (Mills-Courts & Amiran, p. 102). To be able to “do... what you’ve learned” brings into question a host of problematic relations (knowing-doing, teaching-learning) each of which implies a linear, input-output process that is insensitive to the context and the situations that require revision of what has been learned in order to “do” and from which further learning results. The authors feel that the selection and justification of portfolio artifacts and entries “require a ‘doing’ of learning that demands this intellectual self-consciousness” (Mills-Courts & Amiran, p. 102). In the context of transformation theory to “do...what you’ve learned” means to act
on insights gained from critical reflection, which involves “attending to the
grounds (justification) for one’s beliefs” (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223), especially
those grounds that result in transformed understandings, because not all
reflection leads to transformative learning. Not all “doing” reflects an
“intellectual self-consciousness.” When viewed in light of transformation
type, only premise-reflection leads to transformed meaning perspectives.
This distinction is important in understanding the processes and nature of
learning and how it leads to “development.” Situating problem-solving as
being at the “heart of all studies,” the authors go on to say “it is becoming
clear that writing promotes a self-consciousness about this endeavour that
enables students to understand rather than merely memorize” (Mills-Courts
& Amiran, p. 104). While I readily agree with their claim, I wonder exactly
how are problem-solving, reflection (as an act of writing), and understanding
connected? I feel that transformation theory serves to make clear how these
acts are linked through structures of knowledge and processes of learning.

Additionally, the authors place equal emphasis on the portfolio process
and on the product. They do so in this way: “content is learned by reasoning,
understanding is developed as students interact with information that covers
the field, students who have understood and can use previous information
in an active and critical way are those who acquire further knowledge” (Mills-
Courts & Amiran, p. 103). This view, at first reading, evokes a nod of
agreement; however, from the perspective of transformation theory the
nature of the “content” (forms of knowledge) determines the kind of
reasoning (processes of learning) required. The learning process and
reasoning required in instrumental knowledge (hypothetical-deductive) is
quite different from that involved in the communicative (metaphorical-
abductive) domain. This distinction is important because although both instrumental and communicative “content” inform each other, they essentially speak to different interests and require different approaches in their development. The thinking tool in instrumental learning is hypothesis, while metaphor is appropriate for communicative content. Furthermore, the justification or warrant for “content” vis-à-vis claims for beliefs and assertions vary considerably. While the authors view “understanding as being developed as students interact with information,” the motivation that compels and the interaction required for communicative understanding differs from that which seeks instrumental understanding. I maintain that understanding is developed as students “think critically” about “information that covers the field” and about the presuppositions that give shape to their understandings. Furthermore, the authors claim that students who demonstrate active and critical use of previous information produce “further knowledge.” Knowledge, so described, is viewed as cumulative rather than as resulting from a process involving the construing and appropriating of new or revised interpretations for guiding action because “knowledge for the learner does not exist in books or in the experience of the educator. It exists only in the learner’s ability to construe and reconstrue the meaning of an experience in his or her own terms” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 20).

This study seeks to inform the field of portfolio use by responding to an assertion made by Mills-Courts and Amiran, “The definition of “true learning” remains the muddiest and yet most crucial issue in our profession” (Mills-Courts & Amiran, p. 103). While I attempted to provide an answer through my research as did Mills-Courts and Amiran, I acknowledge, with them that my claims are not definitive but seek only to make the muddiness
The lack of clarity in the portfolio literature describing its use as an alternative form of assessment for promoting professional development as reflective habits of practice, is due to the failure of researchers to articulate its claims within a comprehensive framework. Each of the studies reviewed, describes and seeks to promote in some fashion, what can be characterized as transformative learning. Mills-Courts and Amiran affirm this in their study: "Every portfolio (in GCP Program) demonstrates in concrete ways the growth (authors' italics) in students' abilities to think reflexively and critically and to act on the results of such thinking" (Mills-Courts & Amiran, p. 107). Thus, thinking reflectively and critically is the means to "appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223).

Research provides tentative evidence that a portfolio process that engages critical reflection does support teacher "growth" as changes in meaning schemes (Athanases, 1995; Mills-Courts & Amarin, 1997; Winsor & Ellefson, 1995; Masciale, 1996). "Growth" does not imply a stage model of development but transformations in understandings that are on-going and occur throughout life. These changes (in meaning schemes) do not necessarily result in significantly transformed understandings. It is only when there are changes in meaning perspectives that transformative learning and development results. This study explores portfolio construction as a means of supporting teacher development from the perspective of transformation theory. Masciale's doctoral study provides evidence in supporting the portfolio process's ability to sustain transformative learning. She claims that "the portfolio structure and processes potentially offer
students reflective and generative means for articulating their own pedagogical visions: the portfolio can support students’ rereading, and so [sic] redescribing, of classrooms and their places within these” (Masciale, 1996, p. 146). Studies seem to indicate that problem-solving, reflection and dialogue are essential to adult development and growth. Yet, they do not clearly establish exactly how these are interrelated. Understanding of this would, I feel, focus overall efforts to better ensure its achievement. Transformation theory is useful in helping to clarify and make distinctions, which are important in linking forms and structures of knowledge, principally through the role of reflection, particularly its source and its focus, its relation to forms of knowledge and learning, and the role of dialogue in this process. Such a process, Mezirow (1994) claims, “calls for a redefinition of ... evaluation” (p. 226). This work responds to that call.

Summary

Traditional forms of teacher evaluation respond to the need for system accountability and personnel decisions. More recently, the incessant cry for school reform has prompted a renewed interest in teacher evaluation practices, with a view to their potential use for professional development. Traditional evaluation practices fail to account for and support current understanding of available knowledge bases and of principles of adult learning and development. Inquiry-oriented approaches to teacher development acknowledge adult learners as self-directed in their pursuit of interests. They also consider problem-solving as vital to both the learning
process and on-going development. I advocate a view of teacher development as transformative learning. Transformation theory conceives learning and forms of knowledge as comprised of instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory interests. Orientations to portfolio construction for purposes of development prompt an interest in cultivating learner’s communicative and emancipatory interests. Communicative knowledge speaks to adult interest in and need for understanding; as such, its means of proof are metaphoric-abductive and make critical reflection and discourse essential to its development. Inquiry approaches (of which the teacher research movement is the most notable) resonates with communicative and emancipatory interests and with requisite knowledges, articulated by Habermas (1971) and adapted by Mezirow (1991). Adult learning is situated within a problem-solving context that responds to the learner’s communicative needs to understand as well as their emancipatory interests in being free of constraining interpretations. They can achieve this through reflection on the content, process, or premise of a problem; and it is only in the latter instance that transformed meaning perspectives are possible.

A review of the portfolio literature, including dissertation abstracts, listed in educational and social science databases, considered the use of portfolios as part of a review system for in-service teachers (Graham, 1993), principally as a vehicle to self-monitor, professional renewal, and development (Pynkoski, 1996; Athanases, 1994); to document professional development of student teachers (Winsor & Ellefson, 1998); and to sustain development of metacognitive skills (Mills-Courts and Amiran, 1991).

Researchers used various approaches (reflective tools) to support
critical reflection: teacher research, goal-setting, professional development plans, journal writing, educational narratives, educational philosophy, and reading of professional literature, to name only a few. Often they were combined, with varying degrees of success in their ability to promote critical reflection. These studies did not identify which specific reflective tools seem to be more effective. However, I used a combination of strategies to structure the portfolio process. I employed post-participation interviews and portfolio feedback checklists (See Appendix E & F) to determine which activities participants felt promoted critical reflection and lead to new insights (perspectives) on their critical comprehension of experience.

The studies reported used various indicators to verify that the portfolio process sustained development/growth as a function of critical reflexivity. They included: changes in thinking and teaching (Athanases, 1994), enhanced awareness of competencies (Pynkoski, 1996), intellectual self-consciousness and metacognitive awareness of how they learn (Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991), increased skill in self-monitoring and self-evaluation (Winsor & Ellefson, 1995), and self-construction of authority (Masciale, 1996).

This literature identifies reflection and dialogue as critical to educator growth, and my study considers how these serve as vehicles for teacher development as transformative learning. The studies I reviewed articulate an approach to portfolio construction that accounts for instrumental interests and forms of knowing; research findings suggest that a portfolio process focused on critical reflection equally addresses communicative and emancipatory interests. A review of the research reveals conceptual links between knowledge, reflection, learning, and development are missing. Making these connections is crucial to teacher development. I propose a
conception of portfolios based on an articulation of knowledge as consisting of instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory interests. I will establish such a conception on principles of adult learning and development, conceived as transformation, with reflection and dialogue assuming central importance in this process.

Further research into the use of portfolios for professional development is warranted, and is taken up in this study. This inquiry builds upon the studies reviewed by extending current understanding of portfolios as a vehicle in support of teacher development as transformative learning. It explores the use of portfolios as an alternate form of teacher assessment that sustains educators' "growth" through personal inquiry into teaching practices. My study considers the ability of a portfolio process to support critical premise reflection through fostering transformations in teachers' understandings; these transformations result in teacher development and enhanced professional competencies. My work responds to Athanases' (1994) call for research to "examine more effectively the effects of such a portfolio project on the professional development of teachers" (p. 437). Following Wolf's (1995) suggestion, my study embarks on a "serious exploration" that seeks to provide "empirical evidence" for the efficacy of portfolios to enhance teacher development. I do this by viewing development through the conceptual lens of transformation theory whereby changes in meaning structures provide empirical evidence of learning, and hence, development.

Anticipating methodological considerations for structuring the portfolio process, I consider problem-posing as fundamental to development and inquiry as essential to learning. Moreover, critical reflection on premises is vital to transforming understandings, while social interaction is an
essential condition for rational discourse through which teachers can voice and review existing beliefs, and entertain potentially new perspectives.
Demographic Information and Ethical Considerations

The four participants in this study worked in mid-sized elementary schools in the west end of Toronto. They volunteered to participate in constructing a portfolio and the terms of their involvement and the ethical considerations which pertained were articulated in the Consent Letter (See Appendix A). The information collected remained confidential and I ensured anonymity through use of the fictional names that participants chose. Research as a knowledge- (re)producing activity is not exempt from the political and social implications that arise during, and result from, the research process. And so are inextricably bound up with the benefits the writer receives. The ethical deportment of the researcher toward participants was regarded as significant as the ethical responsibility of the portfolio-keeper with respect to the privacy/rights of those who may in some shape or form be included in a portfolio (See Appendix B, p. 134).

Factors Influencing Selection of Schools/Participants

My choice of a study site was significantly influenced by my assignment. I worked with participants in School District A and B, where I taught. Being actively involved within a school as an educator permitted increased contact with participants, an informed understanding of staff, school and community dynamics, and the unstinting support of the administration. As a staff member, I was not viewed by colleagues as an
“outside import” but rather, as a fellow educator immersed in and fully apprised of the oft-time chaotic and unpredictable character of schools generally, and the classroom in particular.

The philosophical orientation of the administrators figure prominently within any research or innovative endeavour, given their preordained role within the school. Their endorsement and unreserved support factors considerably in the success of staff development efforts, as recognized by Lieberman. She cites research undertaken by Little (1986) to highlight the important role played by the principal in the successful implementation of innovative ideas: “Where the principal was actively engaged with [original emphasis] teachers and consistently announced expectations for and modeled behaviours of collegiality, there was increased support for self-examination, risk taking, and collective reflection on practice” (Lieberman, 1994, p. 16). The principal must be active in creating the conditions that support a culture of inquiry, and critical reflection as a habit of practice. The administrators associated with this study showed their commitment to the philosophy undergirding the use of portfolios by allocating time and resources and by making portfolio construction an integral part of the teachers’ assessment. In my study time constraints and other commitments precluded administrators from assuming an active role with direct involvement in the portfolio process; however, they unfailingly expressed their enthusiasm for the potential of portfolios to provide development opportunities for teachers.

I used no specific criteria to select participants. Twenty teachers attended the initial session and only four remained throughout the six-months of this study. Teachers who continued to attend portfolio group
sessions and indicated an interest in the portfolio process, given their expressed personal interests and professional needs (detailed elsewhere), were also included. By chance rather than design, a range of teaching experiences (novice to veteran), assignments (preprimary through intermediate) and subject area specialization (French, English) were represented. All participants were female and this prompts me to speculate how males would have responded to the portfolio process. What kind of personal and professional interests motivate males? Do these interests encompass technical, communicative and emancipatory interests? Do their interests vary significantly from those expressed by females? If so, what factors account for this? How does this impact on a transformative approach to learning? Continued research that includes males will provide answers to these questions.

Data-gathering

I used various forms of data-gathering in this study: participant observation of subjects (within their teaching environment and during group sessions), pre- and post surveys, follow-up interviews, textual analysis of written peer responses, and reflective activities related to past experiences and teaching practices (See Appendices I, J, K). I also taped and transcribed portfolio conversations. The tools used served a dual purpose: they allowed for social research and served as a device for portfolio construction. Reflective activities, including the writing of an educational narrative and a personal philosophy of education, served to elicit beliefs (i.e., meaning structures). Additionally, portfolio sessions created a forum in which participants expressed and reviewed assumptions for their opinions, and voiced and
considered alternate perspectives. Readings related to teacher-selected areas of inquiry prompted alternate perspectives on the issue or topic in question. In support of critical premise reflection, written peer responses and individual portfolio conversations helped participants to become aware of and subsequently question the assumptions that tacitly support their beliefs.

The small number of participants in this study allowed me to follow up written answers to surveys and a feedback checklist (Appendices C, D & F) with an interview in order to clarify responses and probe for meaning structures and changes in understanding. The factors that influenced the choice of questions generated for interviews, surveys, and the checklist, were the initial research questions (posed in Chapter one), and those resulting from my review of the literature (voiced in Chapter two). Other factors affecting the choice of questions included the overall effects of the portfolio process and changes in teacher understanding, and feedback (on the process) to determine which reflective components were effective and how they could be improved. I did not discuss questions with the participants or members of the committee prior to interviews or to the distribution of surveys/checklist. I revised some questions in the initial post-survey questionnaire to respond to the information and data that was being gathered. I revised the post survey that looked at the portfolio process (See Appendix D) with a view to improving it. Additionally, a separate series of questions (See Appendix E) directly related to the purpose of this study focused on the efficacy of portfolios as a means of promoting teacher growth through inquiry into and reflection on teaching practices. I maintained a reflective journal; it was a further source of data that provided insights into the portfolio process as it unfolded.
Portfolio Construction

I developed the interview questions/surveys/portfolio handbook, in part, from my own experiences with teacher assessment, from a textual analysis of the Board document (AGI), and from a review of current work undertaken in the area of portfolio assessment. A copy of the document *Portfolio: Addendum to the AGI Document* (See Appendix B) was distributed to those participating to introduce the concept. Participants were invited to explore the possible forms the portfolio might assume, given their needs and other practical considerations such as organization, intended purpose, and audience. Each portfolio reflected the varied interests and issues represented by those participating. The term "professional" portfolio is used in preference to "teacher" portfolio, since the former term is deployed as both an adjective and a noun and the use of portfolios is not restricted to educators exclusively but is of potential benefit to all who work within the teaching profession and for whose benefit this research is intended.

Chaos Theory in Action

Gleick's (1987) notion of unpredictability best describes the series of events that made the charted course of this research study veer from its path. Teachers rallied together for "Days of Protest" in mid-October in an unprecedented response by educators to the Conservative Government's restructuring of the educational system in the form of Bill 160. That, and my subsequent reassignment to an alternate school significantly affected this study. The first incident created a climate of uncertainty that effectively deferred the initiation of the study from the fall of 1997 to January of the

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9*Bill 160-3: Education, Quality, Improvement Act* (hereafter referred to as *Bill 160*) was legislated by the Assembly of Ontario in 1997. This bill amended the *Education Act.*
following year. Thus, the time frame for participants to develop of a portfolio was cut from a full academic year to a six-month period. Consequently we extended individual portfolio conversations into the summer months to make up time.

Secondly, my relocation to School District B, which is 5 kilometers north-east of School District A, limited the day-to-day contact I had with participants in that school and influenced my support of their endeavours. School District A is situated on a main thoroughfare and services a population of roughly 650 students. Like School District B, a number of the students are bused into the school, and therefore student demographics are not always representative of the immediate community. Both schools are situated in working-class neighbourhoods, that manifest similar needs. Each school, nonetheless, presents a unique culture shaped by the larger community and the individuals working within them. With a student population of approximately 250, School District B had nearly 25 staff members, while more than 30 educators staffed the school at School District A. After forging friendships with administrators and colleagues in School District B, I felt it imperative to extend an invitation to staff there who might be interested in constructing a portfolio. After principal agreed that portfolios would be a viable substitute for the teachers’ “growth plan” and would fulfill assessment requirements, I spoke to staff members, citing possible reasons for their participation, and circulated a sign-up sheet (See Appendix G). These serendipitous events extended the scope of the study to involve administrators and educators from two different schools. It was not until the second week in January of 1998 that I held the first portfolio meeting. The introductory session was well attended, but out of the twenty
present only four individuals consistently attended subsequent meetings. The dynamics of each session varied from meeting to meeting, numbers ranged from three to six. During this time the participants became increasingly connected to each other and equally committed to the process of self-discovery. The portfolio journey undertaken with and by these four individuals is detailed in this study, and later I provide a description of each of the participants.

Portfolio Process

Portfolio Sessions: Rationale

Portfolio sessions were scheduled on a bi-monthly basis so as to establish group rapport, provide on-going support and feedback, and to maintain a degree of continuity in our interactions. The primacy of talk as a source for promoting professional growth (Yonemura, 1982), sustaining a collaborative culture (Hargreaves, 1994), and supporting learning as socially constructed (Grimmett & Neufeld, 1994), and also as a means of critical discourse essential in the development of communicative learning (Mezirow, 1991) is a key reason for maintaining regular portfolio sessions. Integral to the success of the portfolio experience as transformative learning is building the trust that permits risk-taking essential to the growth process. This is particularly necessary for challenging the assumptions inherent in values, but whose questioning can be both liberating and disquieting. Cynthia describes her experience of portfolio sessions in this way:

Actually, I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said that the times that we shared our thoughts amongst each other were the best moments. The way we heard each other's opinions
and concerns was very fulfilling in itself. When I listened to the ways in which others dealt with their situation that helped me to understand my own. Those moments were heartwarming and helpful throughout our growing process. Trust, respect and support was definitely present in our meetings (Post-Survey, Question 11, Cynthia).

In addition, I met with individual participants in order to identify and clarify our goals, discuss strategies and problems and/or questions related to practice, and to receive on-going feedback regarding the portfolio process. The group began to consolidate by the third meeting; group dynamics were subtly influenced by those in attendance from session to session. My preparations for each group session and selection of reflective activities were influenced by the participants teaching assignments. Portfolio sessions were a support mechanism that invited critical dialogue regarding current practice and experience. Members acted as a sounding board for each other; they offered suggestions and invited alternate perspectives on situations and interpretations of experiences. The first four sessions explicitly sought (through the use of reflective tools and strategies) to assist participants with eliciting and exploring their tacit beliefs as they related to teaching, learning, and the curriculum. They also helped them to identify areas of interest, questions, or problems that would focus their portfolio inquiries.

The rationale that structured each session (an overview of which is provided in Appendix H) is outlined for the reader to provide an understanding of the practical needs, methodological considerations, and theoretical perspectives that invest this study. I organized the portfolio process around four basic vehicles: reflective activities, group and individual sessions, peer responses in the form of written feedback, and readings in participants chosen areas of interest.
Portfolio Session #1 - Educational Autobiography

Adapting some of the reflexive strategies developed by Kochendorfer (1994), I invited participants to reflect on their past educational experiences as student and teacher. I did so to enhance their awareness of how the past influences beliefs and current teaching practices (See Appendices I, J & K). Using these activities as a springboard, I asked participants to write an educational autobiography. I used these activities and other reflective forms of writing to make tacit beliefs explicit. As a “sympathetic provocateur,” in my written responses I sought to nudge teachers to look at the assumptions inherent in their views, to consider sources and consequences for them, and to suggest alternate readings/interpretations:

*Portfolio as a working space intent on supporting teacher growth invites critical reflection on the sources and consequences of existing understandings and thus an educational autobiography seems an appropriate vehicle to tap into previous educational experiences that inform current practices*  (Fieldnote: Jan. 13/98).

Portfolio Session #2 – Philosophy of Education

To assist teachers in writing their philosophy of education I adapted three strategies from Kochendorfer: the first (Repertory Grid) sought to elicit constructs (meaning structures) related to teachers and teaching. The second invited reflection on and exploration of teacher’s perceptions of students. Kochendorfer cites the seminal work of Kelly (1955) in the area of construct theory for the RepGrid and attributes the latter strategy, itself a variation on the work of Kelly, to Hunt (1980). Founded on the theories of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the third strategy was used to increase awareness of the powerful (constitutive) effects of language. The strategy focused on the
connotative dimensions of language, specifically on metaphors. It supported teachers’ examination of the social norms and cultural values that are veiled in/by language (sociolinguistic perspective) and its potential to reshape perceptions and alter practices (See Appendix L).

**Portfolio Sessions #3 – Identifying Goals and Areas of Inquiry**

Further examination of teaching practices aimed at the identification and selection of areas for teacher inquiry; this was the focus for sessions three and four (See Appendix M). To this end, I invited participants to explore and think about their “competencies” in order to determine strengths and weaknesses that might serve as a springboard into potential areas of inquiry. I offered a number of prompts and suggestions to support teachers in their search for “robust” questions, including the identification of problems that perplex and intrigue and warrant greater understanding and further exploration. Although participants had received a copy of the portfolio handbook (See Appendix B), I only showed the group my portfolio after they experienced a reflective process. Presenting too early selected products that resulted from my reflective inquiries would have shifted the focus from process to product.

*It seems premature to view examples of portfolios during the introductory session. The “show and tell” format is informative but may be intimidating for beginners, it can also influence expectations and thereby limit potential creativity. Given the expressed purpose of portfolios as a means (process) and form (product) of reflective inquiry it seems more appropriate to share examples of portfolios once participants have identified areas in their practice they wish to explore and/or questions they want to pursue – as Fullan (1993) suggests “inquiry is the engine” for growth* (Fieldnote: Jan. 13/98).
My decision to not display examples (which might have tacitly communicated and been read as the "standard") was also motivated by a desire to invite participants to explore portfolio construction. I invited a guest to the sixth session to provide a different example and interpretation of the portfolio process. Deciding when to show examples (of portfolios) that provoke thinking and stimulate questions that will prompt inquiry is a critical element in the teaching-learning process.

**Portfolio Session #4 - Goal Setting**

Each portfolio is guided by personal needs and professional interests. This factor motivates all forms of learning and sets the direction for each participant's inquiries. I provided a format to assist teachers with the identification of goals and its use be optional (See Appendix N).

**Portfolio Sessions #5 to #8 - Creating a Discursive Community**

The initial portfolio sessions had engaged participants in reflective activities in order to assist them with examining past experiences, articulating views and beliefs, reflecting on tacit assumptions, identifying strengths and needs, and selecting a focus for their inquiries. Subsequent group meetings (sessions 5 to 8) provided participants with a forum for the continuing interrogation, discussion, and refinement of ideas. Making clear it was optional and left to the discretion of each participant, I suggested that they show their portfolio to the school administrator (See Appendices O, P & Q). At our final meeting at the close of the school year we celebrated our achievements. The professional growth and successes witnessed in each
participant's portfolio was enhanced by personal bonds of friendship forged during the months of working together:

A sense of euphoria pervades our final session – our group meetings allow for intimate exchanges (some even tearful) during which bonds of friendship are forged and preexisting ties are strengthened. The telling of classroom stories and the words of encouragement and nods of agreement emanate from a place that each of the participants knows deeply. The exchange of portfolio entries permits insights into lives and experiences difficult to glean and appreciate given the demands of the workplace. In the end, an adventure that began as a professional quest, embarked upon with a mixture of anxiety and anticipation, is an intensely personal and rewarding experience for everyone (Fieldnote, June 22, 1998).

Individual Sessions with Participants

Meeting participants individually allowed me to do the following: assist in clarifying goals, generate strategies, discuss interests, determine strengths and obtain background information. It also gave me an opportunity to connect with them on a personal level and to ensure that the portfolio experience was meaningful.

Furthermore, I gleaned much about the individual’s practice by viewing their classrooms. Our in-class meetings afforded me an opportunity to experience the learning environments that each participant had created. Although members freely exchanged and expressed ideas during scheduled group sessions this forum did not permit the same degree of intimacy and intensity possible in our individual encounters.
Defining My Role

Integral to this study and the participants' experience of portfolio construction was my self-expressed role and my involvement as perceived and required by individual members in the group. As an educator I am increasingly convinced of the importance of cognitive dissonance as a desirable, even necessary agent for promoting learning and growth. Prigogine (1984), a well noted chemist, maintains that a system in a state of disequilibrium experiences spontaneous reorganization at higher levels of development. This search, the movement towards transformed understanding, is the impetus for and essence of learning. The participants questions about, and problems related to, practice as well as other personal intentions compelled participants to embark on a journey of inquiry that leads to self-discovery and enhanced understanding. My written responses to activities and portfolio entries were instrumental in supporting teachers in critical premise-reflection. I encouraged teachers to look at the sociocultural and psychological influences that shape their interpretations of experiences and their understanding of themselves and others, and to search for creative alternatives.

D: I'm reading Liz's educational autobiography and I'm not sure what I should write.
L: When I respond to a colleague's portfolio entry I comment on things that resonate with my own experiences and I offer suggestions for alternate responses to or interpretations of situations. Sometimes I challenge them to think differently about something or to explain what they mean by certain terms, words or concepts they use. I may suggest some readings if it's a familiar topic (Fieldnote, Feb. 6, 1998).

Transformative learning, according to Mezirow, requires the
educator/researcher to assume various roles:

*an educator in this context means to be an empathetic provocateur,... to serve as a role model for critical reflection and the ethical idea of caring... to serve as a committed co-learner and occasional guide...to encourage the multiple readings of "texts," to make a wider range of symbol systems or meaning perspectives available to learners; to create reflective dialogic communities in which learners are free to challenge assumptions and premises... to help learners to critically examine the sources and consequences of their own meaning perspectives and the interpretations they have made of their own lives (Mezirow, 1990, pp. 360-61).*

Initially, I had intended to construct a portfolio with the group; however, a number of factors mitigated against this. Participants with whom I had exchanged my philosophy of education and educational autobiography failed to respond because of time constraints. Because these individuals had responded to pieces they had received from others, I felt they were less committed to responding to my work because I was guiding them through this process. I completed all reflective activities in which the participants were engaged, so I was not perceived as being outside the group or the process. This gave me an opportunity to reflect on my teaching and to model myself as a learner interrogating my own practices.

Description of Participants

Debbie’s portfolio and her reflections are the most comprehensive and served as my principle source of data. I used the responses provided by the other three participants to extend understanding of the efficacy of this process to sustain transformative learning. Following are brief descriptions of each participant’s teaching history, assignment, designated strand for assessment,
motivations for participation and views on assessment/development. This information contextualizes the data source and provides the background necessary to understand and interpret findings.

Debbie

Debbie has been overseeing the Core French programme for eight of the twelve years she has been teaching. Speaking to the reconfigured educational landscape mapped out by Bill 160, Debbie views portfolios as offering some security against the shifting terrain: “I also believe they (portfolios) would be a great asset to have in these uncertain times in education.” Debbie’s sentiments are echoed by other educators and constitute a powerful motivation for their participation in a portfolio process.

Although Debbie was unaware of either student or teacher portfolios she was intrigued and attracted by the opportunity for “personal and professional growth.” In the strands for assessment, Debbie is in the first year of the growth track, and received notice from the principal through reception of “an envelope with [her] placement on the front cover.” The research period happened during Debbie’s third year in her school; its current administrator was in her second year. Debbie was last evaluated (1997) on the “Appraisal Strand,” which resulted in a summative report. Our conversations reveal her subsidiary interests for constructing a portfolio which stem in part from her dissatisfaction and negative experiences with current assessment practices and from her desire to “prove” herself professionally.

Debbie was on maternity leave at the time the Board revised the AGI document (1992) and in-serviced staff. She “never received a copy of the
document" and was only "vaguely familiar with the evaluation processes."

Taped portfolio discussions and impromptu conversations exchanged during the workday, recess and lunch breaks, and after-school encounters, yielded insights into the personal motivations and professional interests (where each significantly impacts on the other) that invested Debbie’s portfolio.

My initial interaction with Debbie occurred through her role as French teacher; this ensured our encounters on a daily basis because she was assigned to teach the newly formed grades 4/5 class that I taught. Our casual acquaintance turned into friendship during our portfolio sessions. Debbie’s past experiences with teacher assessment, uncertainty regarding the future of education, nervousness about possible changes in her assignments (career) and her belief that portfolios will be a requirement for teachers in the near future, motivated her participation. For Debbie, a portfolio was a means of "accountability," a process through which she can clarify, consolidate and conceptualize her understanding of teaching. She saw it as a way to ascertain her career path and prepare for the future. It provided her with an opportunity to grow so she can "be the best teacher I can be."

L: I’m glad the portfolio group will give you an opportunity to work through some of the changes you describe.
D: Constructing this portfolio is really good for me. It’s what I need at this time. I’m thinking about different things – going through changes and I don’t know what I want to do. I need to reflect and think about things. I’m very introspective now (Fieldnote: Jan.30/98).

At a transitional stage (both personally and professionally), Debbie was beginning to “reflect and think about things” that she once took for granted.
The external political changes, turmoil and unrest mirrored Debbie's internal state. Her feelings of uncertainty signalled conditions were ripe for transformative learning. Debbie's need to "prove" herself professionally and her desire to effectively respond to the challenges and needs encountered in the classroom highlight communicative and emancipatory interests. Her search for solutions to practical problems was the source of her learning, the catalyst for growth, and the means of her transformation.

Fran

Fran is a veteran teacher of 25 years. She has undertaken varied teaching assignments spanning grades throughout the divisions in the elementary level. Admittedly her key strengths and greatest rewards were in working with four and five year old children who have engaged her energy and interests these past 15 years.

As the special education teacher and resource-support-to-staff in implementing board identified initiatives in the area of early literacy, I had experienced and appreciated what I heard many of her students express: "I love Ms. Nelson." She mesmerized her young (and adult) audience and, nicely paced her lessons and interspersed them with student involvement and teacher direction that involved varied (small-larger motor) activities. A certain calm permeated the classroom, mirroring her soft and low-keyed manner; she had clearly established routines that evidenced her prior organization and thoughtful planning of the learning environment. During unscheduled visits to her class I learned from and increasingly grew to respect her skills as an educator and her warmth as a person.

To date, Fran's experiences with teacher assessment have been positive,
and she cited a desire for personal and professional growth as the key incentive for her construction of a portfolio; “this (portfolio construction) is my way of trying to get some changes happening.” Being able to justify and explain her practices to administrators and/or parents also motivated her participation. She is currently in the second year of the growth stream.

L: Why did you choose to participate in the study?
F: I really need to stretch myself. I’m so comfortable in everything I do. I need something and I thought this might be a good way for me to do that. I don’t compartmentalize very well. I let everything sort of spill over and when I need to rationalize and explain some of the things I do it’s a problem. I’ll be thinking about something but to get it down on paper, to have anything concrete at the end of it, I’m not very good at that (Fran, p. 136).

Cynthia

As a relative newcomer to the field of education, Cynthia was navigating her way around the classroom as she learned to meet the many demands presented by the four year olds she taught. Into her second year (in a full-time capacity) at School District A, her assignment in her first year had her commuting between two junior kindergarten programs. She was pleased to be in one school and working with students she had taught the previous year. Cynthia had found a friend and mentor in Fran who occupied the room at the other end of the preprimary corridor.

Cynthia had received a summative report in June 1997, which she described as, “Not very pleasant. It (evaluation) wasn’t an experience, it was my own experience I guess. Basically the evaluation was just an overview of what I had written in different words. How can that help you to grow?”
Then on a two-year probationary contract, she was to be reviewed at the end of that scholastic year. Because of the coming review Cynthia’s portfolio was invested differently and spoke, in part, to her motivation for her participation in the study and her desire to be part of this process.

As well, Cynthia expressed her dissatisfaction with both current assessment practices and her experiences of professional development, which had assumed a presentation format aimed at disseminating information from resource personnel down:

_C: I’m just sitting there occupying space. The explanations they give (resource personnel) are not really useful and I find the workshops repetitive. It would be much more worthwhile if they gave teachers time to sit and talk to each other. Let them (teachers) hear what the other SK teachers are doing at other schools. That to me is valuable, using the time to review a document that I’ve read on my own is insulting_ (Cynthia, p. 110-111).

Cynthia’s desire to engage in dialogue with colleagues about real problems of practice underscored the portfolios’ intent to redefine assessment-professional development as transformative learning. Portfolio construction is development done for, by and with educators rather, than “trained professionals.” Equally significant, is the ability of portfolios (as described in this study and to which the participants attested) to provide a forum for collegial interaction. Through it different perspectives on issues of practice are critically reviewed and validated. Our portfolio conversations generated a discursive space in which new understandings emerged and creative solutions were entertained.
Veronica

Having taught in the junior grades for the past nine years, Veronica wished to better understand and respond to the intellectual, emotional, and psychological needs of students in her class's age group. She felt that this was possible only through her own development as a "person" and that for an experience to be professionally rewarding it must also be personally fulfilling. What was particularly significant was Veronica's desire to be "kind," a concern situated well outside technical forms of knowledge; this desire speaks to her interest to understand herself and others. Her need to be kind became the focal question that prompted her activities. Through a portfolio process she located this desire in her own personal experiences interlaced within a cultural, religious and social fabric.

V: Yes they (administrators) want to focus on professional growth. I'm in a space where my need for personal growth is more important than the need to improve classroom practice. Personal growth is related to professional growth. I wanna be kind (spoken softly) (Veronica, p. 129).

During the research period Veronica undertook the principal's qualification course in which the completion of a portfolio was a requirement. Our conversation highlighted the differences in portfolio use and conceptualization in the two experiences. Personal investment and sense of ownership over process and product, which is viewed as critical in sustaining growth and necessary for transformative learning, was absent in the course's approach to portfolio development.

L: How do you feel about the portfolio you are required to complete for the principal's course and the process you are experiencing in this study?
V: The portfolio for the course is more structured. With this portfolio (study) it's personal growth first. We talked about how the personal growth affects you as an educator
whereas in the course the focus is on you as a leader and you need to show growth there. In the course you are to have this binder whereas we are discovering on our own what we want to do. We have a choice what we put in the portfolio, how we will present it. We discussed these as a group whereas in the course the portfolio documents your growth as a leader within the education system (Veronica: p. 235).

Speaking of her interest in participating in this study she writes:

I chose to participate in this project because my professional needs are not being met in my present school. I am not able to process with my staff. I need a forum where I can discuss what is going on in the field of education with other educators who are willing (Veronica's response to Preliminary Survey).

It is common practice for new members of staff to be placed in the appraisal strand, and given Veronica's recent arrival to School District A she received a summative report at the end of the 1997 scholastic year. During the research period, was her first year of the growth stream.

Commenting on her past experiences related to assessment, and asked if the current form as practiced was growth promoting, she stated:

No, definitely not. I do not find the current form of assessment growth promoting. I have yet to be in a school that allows for ongoing discussion around stated objectives (Veronica’s response to Preliminary Survey).

On the topic of professional development, Veronica characterized the completion of her Masters degree and attendance of conferences as “productive.” She also said that continued opportunities to “process around my immediate environment and assignments... in a forum where it is okay to question” is central to a portfolio process as transformative learning. These interests provided the impetus for Veronica’s participation in this study and,
in part, shaped her portfolio and her experience of this process.

**Mr. Oz**

In administration well over a decade, the principal, Mr. Oz, was in his third year at School District A. Maintaining a rather tenuous relationship with the staff, he sat in his office dealing with the myriad piles of paperwork — the closed door communicates his unavailability. Rarely emerging he relegated much of the day-to-day school operations to the vice principal. He communicated indirectly through the vice principal and the secretarial staff or through written notes. While there is great variation in perception (among staff, parents and students) regarding Mr. Oz's effectiveness as an administrator most agreed that he was shrouded in mystery and therefore remained somewhat of an enigma.

When approached in January 1997 about the possibility of inviting staff to participate in portfolio construction as part of my research study, Mr. Oz was immediately receptive. Needing feedback on the Portfolio Handbook prior to initiating my research, his delay in responding postponed my commencement of the study. Consequently, I approached a friend and former principal about the undertaking portfolios with her staff and informed Mr. Oz of her interest and the likelihood that I would transfer the study there. Then he insisted that I pursue the study at "his" school and immediately scheduled a general staff meeting.

His lack of feedback was due less to his full support than to his reliance on my complete orchestration of this process, independent of him. He openly endorsed his support of portfolios (and this is the exact degree of his involvement) by acknowledging that teacher participation would be
recognized as part of their assessment.

On a study leave (1995-96) when Mr. Oz began his first year at this school, I returned the following year to a special education and resource assignment. From that time until my departure to School District B in October 1997 the single exchange related to my own assessment was the receipt of a memo that indicated I was in the first year of the growth strand. Further clarification or communication was not forthcoming.

Ms. Nurturly

A principal for the past ten years, Ms. Nurturly, was in her second year at School District B. When I arrived she was still dealing with a large overflow of students in the junior grades that resulted in the creation of a combined grades 4 and 5 class to which I was assigned. With a student population at approximately 500, the school has grown considerably since the school first opened its doors in 1988 and has witnessed many changes over the years. Generally well received by staff, Ms. Nurturly evinced a friendly and supportive manner that communicated a person-centred style of administration. Perceptions of her effectiveness were shaped by individual educators’ expectations of her response to various situations and contexts, and by people influenced by Ms. Nurturly’s tacit and expressed beliefs, which reflected institutional and parental expectations.

Shortly after my arrival I received an envelope, and recorded on a file folder label affixed to the top was printed the assessment strand in which I had been placed (Appraisal) and the name of the individual who would oversee this process (Ms. Nurturly). Included in this package was a Teacher Survey Form, Statement of Objectives Form, Self-Evaluation Guide, Data
Gathering Information Form and the following memo:

We would appreciate the TEACHER SURVEY FORM from each staff member as soon as possible. We would like to begin the Pre-Conferences before Christmas holidays (1997) and immediately after the New Year begins. Please indicate on the Survey Form a date and time that is convenient for you. At this time your three objectives for the school year will be discussed.

The Data-Gathering Information can be given closer to the Spring when the evaluation report is written. This information is very helpful; particularly for teachers who are in the Growth 1/2 strands  (Office Memo: October, 1997).

Because of the late start in this process (I had arrived in October '97), the unanticipated events that led to the “Days of Protest” and my leave of absence following the March Break, the completion and submission of the “Teacher Survey Form” was the extent of my participation in the process. Recognizing that school demands made it difficult for her to oversee the assessment process effectively, Ms. Nurturly openly embraced my invitation to the staff to initiate a portfolio. By waiving other assessment protocols in favour of teacher participation in this study, she openly communicated her endorsement of portfolios. While Ms. Nurturly was not directly involved in the process as either a participant in our group sessions or in compiling a portfolio, she acknowledged the lack of the teachers’ desired opportunities for professional development.

Analysis

Collection of Data

I kept fieldnotes throughout this study, filling three (90 sheets two-sided) notepads. I documented relevant information received through
personal interviews and informal discussions, and kept all forms of written correspondence with participants and any pertinent Board and school documents. All group sessions were scheduled after school and ran for approximately two hours, and, at the suggestion of Ms. Nurturly, were held in the library located in School District B so as to facilitate any release time needed to prepare for the portfolio meetings. Individual encounters (two or more meetings) with participants ranged from 90 minutes to 2 hours and were held after school, during weekends, and holidays, and at lulls during Professional Development Days at mutually convenient locations. I distributed pre- and post-research surveys (including the feedback checklist) and further developed responses in follow-up discussions, which ranged from 60-90 minutes.

I taped the group sessions and individual meetings which I then transcribed; they yielded approximately 400 pages of data. Peer responses to each of the participants' portfolio entries (inclusive of entries) generated an additional 100 pages of data; I used them selectively in the description and interpretation of this study. Surveys, feedback checklist, and reflective strategies generated data that provided significant insights into the portfolio process, and demonstrated its efficacy in promoting teacher growth and development as transformation.

Coding Procedures

I initially read the transcriptions to familiarize myself with the contents. In subsequent rereadings I focused on questions relevant to this study, which served to generate tentative codes. I coded the data for general
assumptions and beliefs and grouped it according to epistemic, psychic, and sociolinguistic meaning perspectives. I used a reduced form of the participant's actual words and phraseology in the coding procedures. I also used interrelated codes to identify personal and pedagogical themes that included changes in teachers' understanding or awareness (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). For example, I coded and analyzed data for self-perceptions (personal and professional) in relation to the roles of daughter, wife, mother, student, and teacher. Collectively these meaning schemes constituted a psychological and sociolinguistic perspective that assumed a habitual set of expectations related to social roles and identity. I used a combination of narrative (Riessman, 1993) and semiotic and deconstructive analysis (Feldman, 1995) to interpret the resulting texts.

**Transcription and Writing**

When transcribing the interview I recorded silences, false starts, repetitions, non-lexical, intonations and laughter were recorded. As a method of data reduction and analysis, I also identified narrative segments demarcated by a beginning and an ending. I gave particular attention to connotative and denotive elements of language, contradictory feelings/statements, and use of metaphors and pronouns, as well as other semantic and syntactic features of the text. The transcription and interpretation process was informed by my reading and understanding of transformation theory and use of strategies and techniques rooted in a phenomenological approach to research. This orientation assumes that the learners' general assumptions are embedded in and can be inferred from, their written and verbal responses (Brookfield, 1990). I quote transcribed texts
liberally to illustrate and support interpretations in accordance with the cautionary injunction that “ideas must (original emphasis) be grounded in the data” (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). This also allows the reader alternate interpretations. When necessary for interpretation, questions are included to highlight how meaning is jointly negotiated.

Given that all participants (myself included) were female, white, Catholic and of a similar class background (identifying [and thereby] restricting), description of participants according to these cultural markings and the shared similarities in these locations does not imply homogeneity in the group and the views expressed. The fact that all of the participants were female, working at the elementary level, is significant insofar as it means the study and addresses womens’ interest in personal growth, given that who they are as individuals, is intimately connected to the professional. Each participant expressed the need to engage in dialogue with colleagues, and to be supported and affirmed. They also described negative experiences centered around teacher assessment at the hands of predominantly male administrators. The reflexive aspects of portfolio development invites introspection and appeals to forms of communication and expression that research (Tannen, 1986) clearly recognizes as being influenced by gender. This may, in part, implicate the lack of male representation in the group.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Discussion

Overview of Section

This chapter opens with a review of the portfolio process for purposes of identifying components which participants found effective in promoting their development, and offers suggestions for improvement and an overview of difficulties encountered. I then present the major themes and subcategories that resulted from the classification process described and illustrate them with participant quotes.

As discussed in the methodology section, I coded the data for general assumptions and beliefs and grouped it according to epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychic influences on perspectives. Themes, and categories within these, resulted from this coding procedure. Analysis and interpretation of teachers' understandings and changes in these areas should be read against expressed and implied needs. This is particularly relevant given the interconnected nature of interest and knowledge, and the related learning and problem-solving processes. It also entailed consideration of the role of reflection in locating the sources and the consequences for needs, as well as examining the presuppositions of beliefs to determine if and what new kind of understandings has been acquired. Moreover, the themes reflect the overall results deriving from this process as they related to transformation theory. I also describe how transformative learning is sustained through reflective modalities and a problem-solving process. This chapter ends with a summary of my findings.
Reviewing the Portfolio Process: Participant Feedback

I consider the efficacy of portfolios to support teacher development from the perspective of those most affected – the teachers. I had asked participants to reflect on the four main vehicles (reflective activities, readings [in areas of interest], portfolio sessions [group and individual], and peer responses) used to structure the portfolio experience. Responses to the Post-Participation Survey, Feedback Checklist and Follow-up Interview (See Appendices D, E & F) provided insights into the organization of the portfolio process. I reviewed them in order to determine which reflective tools were effective in promoting critical reflection in so far as it refined, affirmed, challenged, and changed their understanding. Participants comments on the vehicles are summarized in the following material.

a) The reflective activities (which include items 2 - 10 on the Feedback Checklist in Appendix E), followed by group discussion, provided experiences viewed by each participant as “personally rewarding,” “thought-provoking,” and “growth stimulating.” As anticipated, participants stated that these activities yield insights into past experiences and beliefs that shape teaching practices, and also increased their awareness as to how their views of “students” and “teachers” need to be situated and interpreted within a social context. Writing an educational autobiography and philosophy of education was a “challenge” and “very difficult,” yet participants also perceived it as “amazing” in so far as: (i) they gained a historical, sociocultural perspective of the “teacher I am and [envisioned] the kind I want to be,” and (ii) could clarify and clearly articulate a personal philosophy.

Writing significant stories from my education allowed me to understand how these early experiences affect what I do in my class. This was a real eye-opener for me. It helped me to reflect on the kind of teacher I am based on the
models I had experienced as a student and made me think about the kind of teacher I want to be. The process helped me to step out of myself and analyze what I’m about (Fran).

Writing the educational autobiography helped me to think back, to examine my past and perhaps realize why I may be a certain way today – seeing that our past shapes who we are and what we do in the classroom (Cynthia).

The most rewarding aspects of preparing a portfolio are reflecting on and self-evaluating my teaching practices and looking for ways to improve. The aspect of preparing a portfolio that I found most useful and that I would recommend to a friend is analyzing and reflecting on my teaching style and arriving at goals that are both real and tangible and that have promoted my professional growth. The portfolio process made me think of the reasons (behind my teaching) for wanting to do this. It involves a lot of time and effort but the end result has been an improved quality of teaching, and therefore, an improved quality of learning (Debbie).

The portfolio process made me think of my past which I don’t always give importance to, and to reflect on this. The process has helped me realize that many of my constructs have been shaped by my past experiences and the “school culture” (Veronica, Post Survey response).

b) Reading literature on topics related to participants’ goals was considered “helpful,” “informative,” and suggestive of strategies and alternate viewpoints on the subject being considered. One participant viewed her reading of articles in terms of being “nurtured intellectually,” thereby framing herself as a professional keeping abreast of developments in the field.

Reading articles on shyness, resistance and others – I feel nurtured intellectually. The alone time is important, it may be difficult to read an article after a long day but you get some great ideas that help you to look at and approach the problem in a different way (Veronica, p. 87).
c) **Group sessions** were viewed as significant in the learning and development process. Sessions provided teachers with "a different perspective," "a chance to step back and assess," an opportunity to "look different(ly) at" problems of practice, to be "clear about what I do and be able to justify this," and to engage in dialogue on issues of importance. They considered the supportive environment essential to their personal and professional development.

_E: Our group sessions are amazing. Your presentations, the activities and the questions you ask, the discussions we have, they generate a lot of thought. It helps me to put things in a different perspective. It gives me a chance to step back and assess. A lot of times I'm just caught up with the process, the doing part you know, not the stepping back from the doing. When I sit here and listen to other people and to you (Lili), then I start to look differently at things. Sometimes when I walk away from these meetings I reflect on what I'm doing and I'm inspired to do things differently (Fran)._

d) **The individual sessions** were viewed as another opportunity for teachers to engage in dialogue, to be supported and/or mentored, to clarify areas of inquiry. These sessions helped participants to articulate needs as goals, to generate strategies, and to assume an active role in the learning process because they set the course by which to navigate their development.

_The one-on-one provided me with helpful guidance and direction to proceed with my goals. It was great to be able to speak to someone about what I'm doing and some of the problems that I'm encountering, and getting ideas on how I can improve. Our discussions gave me a boost and kept me focused (Fran)._

_The dialogue is the most helpful and important aspect in this process. During our conversations I felt I was taking on a more active role in my portfolio, and therefore, my own development (Veronica)._
e) Written peer responses to portfolio pieces echoed sentiments previously expressed; namely, participants felt that feedback was “supportive,” “helpful,” “thought-provoking,” “insightful,” and “affirming.” While participants did not have an opportunity to read everyone’s portfolio pieces, I responded to each participant’s entries. Three teachers felt overwhelmed by my responses and suggested that I limit the number of questions posed. They indicated that this would have been less intimidating and invited a more open response.

I found your responses helpful and very thought-provoking; however, the questions were many, I felt crippled. I would be more willing to write back if only a few items were highlighted (Cynthia).

Suggestions for Improvement

Participants suggested improvements to the organization of sessions so as to enhance their continuing experience while supporting future educators in their development of a portfolio. With respect to the frequency of group sessions, most felt that bi-monthly meetings were adequate. One participant would have “liked more group discussions but time and commitment constraints would make this difficult.” Building time for portfolio discussion during staff meetings or divisional and team planning would ensure portfolios promote an active, on-going element of self-assessment and teacher development that is integrated into daily school practice. This would create a collaborative culture sustained by professional dialogue around individual and shared issues of educational practice. An unwavering conviction regarding the philosophy of the portfolio process and an unconditional endorsement of school administration would make this possible.
Allowing more time for reflection through writing during each session was also suggested. "When new strategies were introduced or new formats, I would have found it helpful if I was given an opportunity (5-10 minutes) to write down ideas... a few moments for reflection... more time to write would have been helpful" (Cynthia). Although participants were invited to record their thoughts and any ensuing changes in their understanding or practice in a journal, many found it difficult to maintain. “If a colleague were to begin a portfolio, I would recommend that they begin at the beginning of the year and if possible keep a journal from the beginning. If I had kept a journal, some of the entries for the portfolio would have been easier for me” (Veronica).

Including some time for journal-keeping at the beginning or close of each session would allow for this; in response to this idea, I presented each of the participants with a personal journal at our final meeting. In addition, some wanted an increased opportunity for individual discussion. Allowing a half hour before or after each group session, to accommodate participant’s needs, was also recommended.

Finally, participants suggested beginning the portfolio process in September. However, as stated, changes in school assignment and the political climate and events surrounding Bill 160, had precluded this. The group sessions were scheduled to resume in the Fall of 1998, given the favourable response received from each participant and their desire to continue with the process.

**Difficulties Encountered**

Each participant felt that the time requirement essential for this process was often difficult to set aside. However, once immersed in the task
they experienced a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Allowing time within the workday for educators to meet and discuss issues of practice, as connected to a portfolio process, would require creative scheduling and a commitment on the part of the administration. At the same time orchestrating this process should not be viewed as predominantly an administrative responsibility. Educators can oversee portfolio sessions and act as mentors for each other as demonstrated by this study:

I would recommend that colleagues develop a portfolio because it would promote their growth both as a professional and a person. This can be achieved if group meetings for portfolio discussions are scheduled regularly. These discussions would prove to be personally nurturing and professionally fruitful (Veronica, response to Post Survey).

Of immediate concern was the sense of "inadequacy" that resulted from engaging in these reflective activities. Such feelings stemmed from self-imposed expectations, and not from any expectations I had set.

Two participants had difficulty with the writing process, each for different reasons. The most senior member felt that her many years of absence from formal "academic challenges" had unduly ossified her writing (and thinking) abilities (required by this process). The youngest member (both in age and years of experience) did not perceive writing as a strength and had identified improving this writing process as a goal.

For a long time I didn't know if I would be able to commit to the written component, but I was enjoying the oral aspect of the process (Fran).

It was a challenge for me to attack one of the areas in which I felt less confident (compared to the others) and identify that area (literacy) as a need, and state it as my goal (Cynthia).
Although participants were invited to use other vehicles of expression it is evident that they preferred the written media. Those who possess acknowledged strengths in this area have an advantage (as do those with organizational skills) as reflected in the portfolio “products.” This serves to bias (shift focus from the process) the portfolio viewer and is of some concern, as described by others in the literature (Wheeler, 1993; Collins, 1990). Coincidentally (or not) these two participants did not produce a comprehensive portfolio that evidenced some sort of organization; while many reasons factored into this (time and stated intentions most notably), their self-admitted uneasiness with writing may have partly accounted for this.

Interest/Knowledge and Portfolio Construction

The interests (motivations) that participants entertain for constructing a portfolio cannot be overstated because they lie at the heart of a portfolio process as transformative learning and ensure that professional development is intimately connected to and invested with the personal. Such intentions ultimately inform the goals/themes selected, which (for some) serve as an organizational vehicle for their portfolio. Participants expressed different and unique sets of needs; their attainment and fulfillment determines whether their experience of a portfolio process is meaningful; simply phrased, any attempt at teacher development must answer the unspoken question: “Does it fulfill my needs (technical, communicative and emancipatory)?” Unequivocally, the participants viewed their participation in this process as a positive learning experience that was personally rewarding and professionally enhancing. Results from their engagement in portfolio construction may not
have lead to immediate changes in practice but each felt that their involvement in this process has satisfied their reasons for participating. Their responses acknowledge the flexibility of the portfolio structure to accommodate a range of practitioner needs and provide different means to achieve them.

An overview of the section titles used by Debbie and Veronica in the organization of their portfolio identified their needs, which were further expressed as goals. Cynthia and Fran felt they were still at the “beginning stage,” which precluded their compiling a comprehensive portfolio. The goals which they identified are also listed. Despite the subtle and significant differences that invest the portfolios of these two participants their goals are jointly shared given the recent board initiative on promoting literacy in the pre-primary and primary grades.

**Portfolio Contents**

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Commonly cited motivations for portfolio construction are divided into two categories: personal and professional; however, this separation is a by-product of data analysis and reduction, rather than a confirmation of its existence. In practice, these domains are mutually reinforcing without clear boundaries.
Personal Needs and Professional Interests

A discussion of participants' motives for portfolio construction speaks to needs, fears, and desires that are as much professional as they are personal because they encompass communicative and emancipatory interests.

C: I feel that who I am as a person is part and parcel of who I am as a teacher. Who we are and how we live our lives is reflected in the choices that we make. So I thought by exploring this particular theme through my portfolio it would help me to become a better person as well as assist me in my teaching. So that's the premise I used to select my goal (Cynthia, p. 63).

L: What is your motive for participating in this process? D: My motive for doing this (the portfolio) was for revenge. I was going to show her, prove to her (administrator) she's wrong (regarding comments written in her summative evaluation). But as I was doing it (portfolio construction) and learning about myself and my teaching I thought, no, this is for me....(emphasized). I really needed to know more about me as Debbie the teacher and Debbie, the mom at home (Debbie, p. 201).

V: The on-going dialogue allowed for clarification of my personal philosophy as a person living her life as well as defining my philosophy in education. What I value as a person is very much what I value as a professional, for me there isn't a clear line that divides professional growth and personal growth, there's an overlap. So professionally with reference to the actual portfolio it just gave me an opportunity to be more clear (Veronica, p. 41B).

Adducing their principal interests, participants cited the following:

- a need to address self-identified areas of weakness, personal and professional insecurities, and problems of practice;

- a desire to explain the "why"of practice;

- a need to "energize, redirect and look for solutions";

- a form of self-accountability and a means of "protection" against bias in teacher evaluations;
- a desire to become a "better person" and a "better educator" in order to enhance the learning of all students;

- a need to reevaluate career/self with a desire to chart new directions;

- a need to deal with personal/professional "stressors" – avoiding burnout;

- a need to be viewed as "professional";

- a desire for personal growth articulated around professional goals and viewed as "important";

- diversification of teaching strategies;

- a need to "understand others," to improve human interactions;

- a desire to overcome feelings of "comfort," to "stretch self, recognize shortcomings and get changes happening";

- a desire for collegial interaction and the need for peer support;

- a means of counteracting fears generated by changes introduced by Bill 160;

- a need for change and to deal with feelings of personal and professional "dissatisfaction" and "unhappiness";

- a need for an outlet to discuss issues of practice;

- a frustration with current assessment practices and a need to feel empowered and proactive in this area;

- a struggling with and desire to find one's "voice."

These needs convey communicative, instrumental, and emancipatory interests; however, there is considerable overlap. In some cases technical concerns are informed by communicative interests and the deductive process appropriate to instrumental knowledge is useful in solving practical issues. Gaining technical knowledge can be motivated by a desire to be more
empowered. Consequently, participants' expressed needs were not grouped according to corresponding interests.

Cultural, Political and Gender Influences

Fears emanating from a sense of insecurity as a result of the changes legislated by Bill 160 created an undercurrent of general despondency. Within the teaching profession this is captured by feelings of "disillusionment" and "frustration."

V: I'm getting basically very disillusioned with the education system and the players.
L: The players?
V: The players, the people who come into the building regardless of their positions. I'm at the point in my life where I feel I need to retract and look at myself (Veronica: p. 60).

These fears simultaneously alluded to the desires harboured: a greater sense of control over one's teaching situation and a personal sense of reward and fulfillment from professional engagement. Consequently, participants' motivations were critical in shaping their portfolios, making each a unique reflection of its creator and demonstrating her strengths, interests, and "needs."

D: I've gone further ahead with my portfolio than any of the others because I really need to do this for myself, to be a better teacher, mother, wife, a better person. I don't know what their (other participant's) motivations are but I'm starting to question things more (Debbie: p. 210).

Individual needs and aspirations are influenced by personal biography, teaching experiences, and assignments. These must be historically situated and read against the larger social and political context, which include the
Consider the political climate to which Debbie alludes:

D: I need to do this, I find that I'm going through a self-analysis of teaching. This started (unclear) with the College of Teachers and with the changes Mike Harris (current Premier of Ontario) is bringing about. I believe in myself as a teacher but have I been one of these teachers that have been slacking off or have I been doing my best? How have I changed? I found that this has been a year of self analysis and doing this (portfolio) is really good for me (Brenda, p. 1).

- or the personal biography and teaching experienced that influence Fran;

F: I think we move through different stages of life with different expectations and what made you happy then is not necessarily what's making you happy now. There's so many changes in so many areas. That's what life is, it's change. So whatever is important at that point in my life becomes my focus. We don't stay the same, I haven't (laughs) (Fran, p. 186).

- and the social, cultural (and religious) expectations that impacted heavily on Veronica's needs. Her words, spoken in staccato fashion, reveal her pain:

V: I have high expectations of myself. I know this year's an exception, it's been a constant struggle for me to understand people. This is where the spirituality happens, where I need to be content and not put expectations on other people, not to take things so seriously but to understand where other people are coming from. So I know where to put my energies and to understand my limits with various people. It's been better, being part of this group helps me to put things into perspective (Veronica, p. 61).

Significant in Veronica's disclosure is her self-expressed (communicative) interest in this process to assist her in being able to know
“herself.” She would consequently be able to “understand where others are coming from” in order to meet the needs of “people at all times” and to “be kind.” These desires, heavily influenced by gender, are reified through religious and institutional practices. Historically women were viewed as man’s less “rational,” purely “emotional” subordinates. This male dominated, sociocultural viewpoint yields material effects (experienced as a “struggle” and sense of disquiet), and notably reflected in Veronica’s words. Her desire to be free of such “immaturity,” described by Mezirow as “distortions,” and to acquire more enabling perspectives, bespoke her emancipatory interests.

L: What do you mean by parts of your life are immature?
V: There are things that I’d like to deal with a little better. For example, if a person is upset with me I invest too much energy thinking they’re angry with me. It hurts me, I lose sleep over it, I don’t eat well. So this is how I’d like to be stronger as a person and a professional. To be in a position of conflict and not to see it as something wrong. That’s my understanding, that I’ve done something wrong, they’re going to be angry with me and I’m going to be punished. I want to be confident that I acted in the best way given these particular circumstances and not to be consumed with their upset.
L: Has this improved since you’ve been part of this process?
V: Very much so, I understand it better, it’s increased my confidence but it continues to be a struggle for me. To feel the approval of others (Veronica: p. 52B).

The constraining effects of sociocultural perspectives on gendered identity are also expressed, although in somewhat different, but no less poignant terms, by Debbie who disclosed fears, hopes, and desires, which reflected needs that are comprehensible as they become unravelled through the cultural fabric.

D: I don’t want to upset people (spoken through tears). I try to be too nice.
L: Are you afraid that somehow you will fall in another’s
estimation if you express your views?
D: I can't be disobedient to my parents. I don't wanna cause problems with my husband.....(crying).....I don't wanna cause problems at work. I just don't wanna cause anybody any problems. That's what society tells us, that you're supposed to "behave," be "obedient." That a mother should be this and wife should be that and a teacher should be this way. That's what I've found helpful in going through this process, it's helped me to see things differently, to understand some of these things (Debbie, p. 197).

The motivations for personal and professional goals, themes, and areas of inquiry, arise from technical, communicative, and emancipatory interests that are an expression of the portfolio keeper's unique biography. The motivations reflect participant's "stage in life," and are a response to political, social, and cultural values. Such factors are significant in shaping the portfolio, making it as much a personal testament as a cultural artifact, and one that must be socially and historically situated so as to be comprehensible.

Meeting Diverse and Changing Needs

Although interests are expressed as needs and reflective of situational context, they are not fixed but are in constant flux. The flexibility of the portfolio structure accommodates both the diversity and range of participants' needs, given their communicative and emancipatory interests, and its many transformations.

D: In my professional and my personal life this has been a time of crisis. I found that the portfolio focused me: it put my feet flat on the ground. It has built my self-esteem, my confidence and I needed that. The experience has been cathartic for me. I mean life's a journey but right now this is where I am but this could change (Debbie, p. 62B).

Assisting participants to cope with changes experienced in their daily
living (including those brought about by this process), the portfolio process provided a forum for the exploration of personal issues that were connected to problems encountered in their practice. The problems experienced as personal, once voiced publicly were recognized as shared and endemic to society. Through reflection of and inquiry into their motivations and consequences, different understandings of the issues emerged. This occurred for Jerri, who was still coping with the upheaval of divorce, and Debbie, whose firm Catholic upbringing made disciplined children the measure of a “successful” mother and/or teacher.

a) families in transience;

J: I was trying to understand my teaching as well as my own situation because I was encountering kids who just didn’t want to learn, who had other issues they were dealing with, like blended families. I thought it was uncanny that I’d be counselling parents as to their family situations and then I’d be going off to see an official guardian in regard to my own situation (Jerri, p. 67).

b) problems with discipline and conflict management;

D: So I’m trying at home and at work to be (laughs) consistent and firm without yelling, without flipping out. It’s so hard. I can see that this relates to what we’ve been talking about, you know the cultural expectation that children should be “good” and “obedient” and that you’re viewed as a good mother or teacher according to their behaviour. It makes sense (Debbie, p. 197).

Learning Styles: Epistemic Perspectives

Contribution to the portfolio experience as transformative learning are the varied learning styles and individual strengths of their designers. Some participants expressed a need to understand the rationale behind activities and to see its connection to their practice and the portfolio process. This may
not have related directly to the participant’s mode of learning, but more to their understanding and perception of the relation of part to whole, their ability to fuse concrete and abstract thinking, and to compartmentalize and generalize. According to Mezirow (1991) the learner’s epistemic meaning perspectives “involve the degree to which objective reality is deemed knowable, the nature of the objective knowledge and the way beliefs are justified” (Mezirow, 91. p. 124).

Participants whose strengths include being “task-oriented” and having facility with written expression and “organizational skills,” were clearly at an advantage. The ability to express themselves and learn through verbal and visual modalities was evidenced by each and opportunities for observation and dialogue were provided within our sessions.

F: That’s part of my problem. I don’t compartmentalize very well, like I let everything sort of spill over and I can rationalize this and put off that. That’s just how I behave, I’ll be thinking about something but to get it down on paper, to have anything concrete at the end of it. I’m not very good at that (Fran, p. 136).

C: It’s up here... (taps index finger on temple)...(laughs)... L: Mnnmph.....
C: I find that I can visualize it, I can see the whole thing, the parts just haven’t come together (Veronica, p. 73B).

Participants expressed the need for time-management and the provision of actual frameworks and formats for portfolio organization, goal setting, and journal responses were used by those who required more structure and direction.

In the process of identifying constructs (meaning structures) relative to “student” and “teacher,” the participants recognized individual strengths and weaknesses, their own preferred modalities and learning style, and how this
shaped their teaching. The similarities noted among the constructs identified bespeak the beliefs and values that are situated in a shared school culture and that are socially influenced. Differences, however, hinted at individual strengths, preferred modalities of learning, and individual biography. These findings reinforced interpretations made in previous sections regarding the larger social context in their ability to influence “needs,” which figure prominently in portfolio (and teacher) development.

According to Mezirow (1991), the learner’s epistemic meaning perspectives “involve the degree to which objective reality is deemed knowable, the nature of the objective knowledge and the way beliefs are justified” (Mezirow, 91. p. 124). Debbie’s shift from her initial need for approval from authority figures to her subsequent defence of practices, despite the administrator’s views, reflect her ability to justify her beliefs given empirical observation based on renewed conceptual understanding of the particulars of practice. This movement indicates Debbie’s development of “reflective judgment.”

D: The principal said that changing the program too much is not good. Students should know what they need for grade nine. I told her that skills are being learned in a meaningful way and the kids are more interested when I use plays, poetry and literature instead of the exercises. She said, “Well I don’t know if I believe in all that motivation stuff” but I know that the students are learning based on what I’m doing now. I can see the results and I’m going to continue with it. The kids are progressing, they like the changes I’ve made and that’s what really counts (Debbie, p. 215).

Other traits that are less connected to “styles” of learning and modality preferences and are reflective of personality, working habits, pace/rhythm, etc., were also recognized as areas in which participants sought change. These
include: avoidance behaviours, perfectionism, a “no pressure” attitude, the need for structure, lack of confidence in new situations (as in this process), tendency to be intimidated, disorganization, a need for control, obedience or adulation, a need for approval, a noncommittal nature, confusion, difficulties with identification, and articulation of goals.

The criteria used by teachers to evaluate the success of the portfolio experience to promote their development is found in the motivations that spurred their participation: the meeting and fulfillment of a “deep need.” Adult interests (expressed as needs, fears, desires, expectations), as evident from this study, are not exclusively technical in nature but also communicative and emancipatory. A portfolio process accounts for and supports such needs. Through a reflective learning process their sources and consequences are considered, and this leads to development in terms of changed modes of understandings in which more enabling perspectives are found.

Effects from Participation in a Portfolio Process

The effect of participating in a portfolio process significantly substantiated its efficacy for promoting teacher development as transformative learning. Participants expressed and evidenced, in varying degrees, changes in understanding and/or previously unassumed awareness of selves, others, and contexts.

Teacher and Student Constructs

Group discussions focused on activities (See Appendices I & L) and lead to heightened awareness of similarities and differences in perspectives. A
shared school culture sustained the former, while individual strengths, needs, personal history and experiences explain the latter.

C: Listening to Veronica talk about her experiences enlightened me. We all have...(clears throat)...difficulties and everyone is basically in the same boat. Everyone is struggling with something. It may be different things but we're all on this journey you know. Struggling and trying to maintain our sanity at the same time (Cynthia, p. 14B).

Veronica, like Cynthia, gains a sense of comfort in recognizing individual “journeys” as a shared “struggle,” a theme explored by many intellectual and literary luminaries ranging from Jane Austen to Emile Zola. The realization that the meaning and comprehension of experiences is not exclusively personal, but also social, helped the teachers to look at their experiences differently and to entertain changes. In a study of women who reenter an educational system, Mezirow describes four types of learners based on their “readiness for transformative learning.” The transformative learners recognized how the culture and their own perspectives colluded to “define and limit... options through prescribed and stereotypic roles... (to) realize that personal problems were shared by other women and... were public issues” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 218).

V:.When you sit down with a group of people you become sensitive to other people's journey, their problems and issues. You realize that you're not alone in your feelings, that your problems are the same as others and it's a problem of society. With reference to the participants in our group we are all at different points of our journey but there is a familiarity about the experiences that are described. Each journey is different but our conversations act as a reminder that everybody in her own way is struggling to be a better person (Veronica, p. 52B).
Evident in the above quotes and confirmed by discussions in our subsequent sessions, is a recognition of similarities and differences which invited Veronica to become more accepting of others and herself. Reflection lead to an understanding that “everyone has a journey, the journey is different.”

L: Since your participation have your constructs about students or teachers changed or been refined?
V: As I mentioned I’m quite reflective now, my understanding has changed. I’m more aware that everyone has a journey, the journey is different. Everyone finds themselves at a different place, they travel at a different pace, they’re affected by different things. I’m more accepting of where they are but its frustrating, I feel that they’re on different wavelengths but at the end of the day it’s almost as if they can’t change where they are. So I’ve been more accepting of where people find themselves and where I am. I’ve become more accepting of others and myself (Veronica, p. 51 B).

Increased self-awareness and recognition of patterns in behaviour, which participants were previously unaware of, or selectively chose to disregard, once brought to consciousness and voiced, became filtered through actions.

D: The students are really responding to the plays (spoken in animated tone). They really like the changes I’ve made. I know I’m making visible changes in the classroom with students, and the response is positive (Debbie, p. 26).

When reflection leads to increased awareness that is manifested as “visible changes in the classroom, with students” it signals transformations in thinking and renewed understanding of the self and the teaching-learning environment.
Changes in Understanding: Curriculum, Students, Learning and Teaching

On a professional level, Debbie described pronounced changes in her view of the curriculum and learning, and in her attitude toward students and teaching. Recognizing her concern with student discipline may relate to their disinterest, she developed a practical survey to determine the source of her students' attitudes. Through the portfolio process, Debbie realized that curricular programmes do not have to be prescriptive of teaching methods. This lead to changes in her views toward the curriculum, programme, and pedagogical orientation.

D: I thought I had to follow this programme but I realized I didn't have to if I could justify what I'm doing and why. If plays are increasing students' oral fluency, and this compels student interest and motivates their participation then I use it. So I've been using plays and they love it! (spoken with emphasis). It's incredible they (students) love it; parents are asking me if I need help with costumes and it's just great! I can't believe it! What a turn around (Debbie, p. 37).

Our discussions (group/individual) and Debbie's own inquiries helped to stimulate her thinking. Focusing attention on the sources of the problem, and critical reflection on premises lead to changes in Debbie's perceptions of students and redefined her role as a teacher.

D: You got me thinking why are they (students) behaving this way? How can I motivate students? So I started to think I know they like me as a person but I went in there thinking: Okay here's the French programme, I'm the teacher, you (the students) have to listen to me and I'm gonna teach it (French curriculum) to you. The programme was dry and boring and the students would talk and start screaming. I thought this is wrong, something's not working here, we're not bonding, what is the root of all of this (spoken emphatically). I thought I had to teach the programme but now I've changed it.
Since I changed it (approach to French) the students are writing French poetry for me, even the needy kids. I've never had that kind of response from intermediates, they're really cooperating and working with me (Debbie, p. 84).

L: You think differently about students now and how you interact with them?
D: Absolutely, how I speak to students, my language, and my way of thinking that I have to control them, means they have to obey. Wake up and smell the coffee, they're just not like that. So we have to change our way of speaking and thinking and dealing with students (Debbie, p. 185).

Being able to articulate and defend her practices (accountability), Debbie's attitude toward her teaching has changed. This brought her a renewed sense of herself as a "professional."

L: You said this process has changed your attitude toward teaching?
D: I'm more professional, I'm more accountable. I think about what I do, I examine why I do things in a certain way and I can explain the reasons for this. When things don't work out in the class I try to think of other ways of reaching them (the students) and why things aren't working (Debbie, p. 1B).

In the affective areas, enhanced reflexivity was manifested in a shift in Debbie’s perspective when trying to understand students and situations. This effectively changes her relationship with her students.

D: I've had a much better rapport with the intermediates.
L: And to what do you attribute this?
D: This (portfolio construction), it really makes you accountable. It makes you think about everything you do, and why you do it. It benefits the students. I'm just trying to understand them. When I go in there I ask them questions about things that they like to talk about, "Qu'est ce que vous avez fait ce weekend? Qui a vu le film?" Then I tell them something about my kids,...(laughs)...I just try to bond with them, instead of thinking of them as these beasts....(laughs)... I also try to make the program
more personal rather than opening a textbook and completing the exercises (Debbie, p. 166).

Renewed enthusiasm and energy was witnessed, as was revaluing of what was previously taken for granted in daily practice. Through this process (specifically the structure) separate acts were connected given the integrative orientation of the portfolio process.

F: The portfolio made me recognize that there's stuff that I can draw on that is already in existence. Your questioning and refining and the separate little bits come together and everything is not just new (Fran, p. 148).

Recall that two of Fran's main concerns were her inability to "get things down" and her need to gain distance from the immediacy of the classroom and her desire for a more conceptualized understanding of that experience. Through the portfolio she was able to connect the "bits" and to gain a global, more "whole" perspective.

It gives me a chance to step back and assess. A lot of times I'm just caught up with the process, the doing part you know, not the stepping back from the doing (Fran).

Changes in Self-Awareness: Psychological Perspectives

Self-Perception

I noted changes in how participants viewed themselves and their role within the classroom. Participants questioned notions of "teacher," "student," even "mother" and "wife," and challenged previously held assumptions regarding expectations associated with these culturally inscribed roles. Each of the participants expressed and evidenced changes in her level of self-awareness. However, only Debbie's portfolio experience can be
described as transformative since it touches on premise reflections that relate to her concept of self. The changes in self-understanding that result are the most significant according to Mezirow, and the readiness of the learner determines the degree to which the learning (portfolio process) is perspective enhancing or altering. Both Veronica and Debbie speak of being at a “certain point or stage in life... thinking about things.” Their words intimated a predisposition toward a renewed understanding of themselves, one which can help them to make sense of the past, understand the present, and to envision a future less constrained by “distortions in meaning perspectives.” Significant life events increase the learner’s propensity toward such changes. In Brenda’s case, personal upheaval combined with professional disappointment with her last performance review sent her on a search for “something...I’m looking for something.” Veronica’s dissatisfaction with teaching leads her to question her choice of career and, like Debbie, she is searching for answers.

L: Was it (the portfolio process) meaningful for you?  
D: It turned my life around. The time, the thought, the reflection. The portfolio is me, trying to be better, not just a better teacher, a better person, a better wife, a better mother. The discipline strategies I use at school, I’m using at home – it’s even changed the way I interact with my husband. I’m sick and tired of being walked on. This (portfolio process) just started a whole reflective thing in me. It was like a turning point for me. I told you when I first started, I said I need this remember? I couldn’t explain it then but I knew I needed this (Debbie, p. 3B).

Debbie described her personal transformation as a “transition,” a “revelation:”

L: How would you describe the effects of the portfolio process?  
D: I went through a whole transition, a complete transition, which is good. I wasn’t happy at work or at
home and I thought this has to change. Now I’m happier, I can’t tell you what a revelation this has been for me. I’ve learned a lot about myself and the kind of person and teacher I want to be. It’s really good for a teacher to go through this process (Debbie, p. 94).

Experiencing renewed self-understandings through transformed psychological meaning perspectives, Debbie confirmed that the process is not without “growing pains.” As expressed earlier, such learning is not without an emotional charge and can be as exciting as it is terrifying since new understandings generally bring changes in their wake. The numerous “transitions” in her thinking and attitudes combined with the resultant changes in her personal life and in her teaching practice, generated much dissonance and tension – a further confirmation that the portfolio process was a growth-enhancing experience for her.

D: It’s really hard when you make changes, it’s good but it’s been really hard too. Big change takes a good year to accept. It’s a mourning period even though it’s good change it still takes a year for people to work through change. I just had some growing pains to go through, that’s all (Debbie, p. 195).

Personal Consciousness

Each participant expressed what can be described as enhanced personal consciousness. They had heightened awareness of how the personal is imbricated in the professional. Having achieved this new understanding of selves (as circumscribed by personal and professional roles) change was inevitable. My findings support Mezirow’s view that once changes in understanding occur, their movement is unstoppable and irreversible. Having burst its casing, the seed continues to grow and cannot be returned to
its seminal state. The metaphor used to describe this process is true of learners as well, since heightened awareness renders it difficult for the learner to revert to previous modes of being and patterns of behaviour. The insights gained from this learning process serve to guide future actions. Participants' experiences, particularly Debbie's, confirmed the ability of a portfolio process to lead to "reflective action" and movement toward "more conscious and conceptualized representations" of themselves as professionals.

L: What has the portfolio process done for you?
D: Aware, aware, that's the word aware. I'm more aware of what I'm doing and how it affects them (the students). How I'm speaking, my instructions, my tone even my body language. I think about what I do, how I do it and why and its impact on students. I could go back to just doing more boring things but I don't want to, I can't. This process really made me reflect on myself and I want to continue to grow as a person and a professional (Debbie, p. 10B).

L: It's (portfolio process) given you increased awareness?
F: That's what this whole process has done. It's the awareness that's the most important thing that I've gotten from this (portfolio process) a lot more awareness about myself and it crosses over to my awareness of other people and the situations that I find myself in within the classroom and how I'm dealing with things. It makes me understand that there's a word for what I'm doing or there's a method that other people have tried that I'm applying that I'm now aware of. It's increased my awareness about the ideas that I was sort of oblivious to before this. It certainly made me aware of my own isolation, it just broadened my view of my past and my present (Fran, p. 60).

Fran's awareness that "there's a word... or a method" to describe what she was doing demonstrates her enhanced ability to describe the specifics of her teaching in light of the abstract. She could conceptualize and rationalize teaching acts that were previously indefensible based on theoretical
understanding. This was an expressed need which initially motivated Fran’s participation.

Cynthia’s enhanced self-reflexivity points to increased metacognitive awareness. Where once her practices went unquestioned, she now inserted herself (vis-à-vis what she values) into the picture when framing the classroom. The process elicited as it supported, greater self-evaluation, which is less a skill than a habit of practice:

L: You said you’ve made changes since you’ve been part of this process. Can you describe them?
C: I’ve made changes but these stem from the changes that happened in me and then they go through the program. I’m starting to assess what I’m evaluating when I evaluate the children (Cynthia, p. 20B).

F: They (reflective activities) gave me insight into the type of teacher that I was and am and hopefully something to aspire to in some cases. For me it was a tool in self-evaluation. It made me think more about what I’m doing (Fran, p. 29B).

Transformation in understanding results from increased self-reflexivity and self-evaluation that serves to democratize teaching practices:

A change that resulted from my teaching is...
More class meetings – students invest more in the process.
Some evidence that I have made that change is...
Children share the responsibility of behaviour management.
When I made this change this is what happened...
My students seem more eager to tell others in the class what is appropriate.
(Veronica’s response to Reflection Sheet, Appendix R).

What was challenged while compiling my portfolio was:
- my complacency: to question and not accept what others say
- my ideas of the cut and dried – “how to,”
- for me to be more introspective about my teaching; to explain what I do and why (Post Survey # 8 F).
Nudging Fran's "complacency," reflection on taken-for-granted aspects of self/practice invited resistance to "ideas of the cut and dried." Given her inclination to question the claims of others and her enhanced ability to think critically about what she did and to support this "rationally" (conceptually), I witnessed her increasing skill to "negotiate meanings and purposes instead of accepting the social realities defined by others" (Bowers, cited in Mezirow, 1991, p. 69). This is, the reader will recall, indicative of communicative competence.

Self-Confidence

Each participant felt that the process was a "confidence-building" experience. For one participant it reaffirmed not only her abilities as an educator but also renewed her self-esteem. The process gave her an opportunity for self-affirmation and provided her with a map to chart her professional course – a beacon by which to sail. The portfolio contents acted as a concrete reminder that rough waters are always part of any journey, and that steering through them successfully enables one to confront future challenges:

D: In my professional and my personal life I found that the portfolio has built up my self-esteem, my confidence. I'm looking at the things that I've accomplished in a short period of time. Everything I put in the portfolio shows that I am reflecting and thinking about what I do. I was always thinking and trying to improve, trying to be better. And it's there in the portfolio (Debbie, p. 62).

Teacher as Transformative Learner

Evident from participant involvement in a portfolio process is the
reframing and repositioning of teacher as an active problem-solver capable of identifying problems and establishing goals, locating causes and consequences for concerns (premise reflection), changing views and attitudes, confronting barriers (personal or systemic), acting on acquired insights (reflective action), making observations to (empirically) validate new understandings/changes, and doing on-going reflection and self-evaluation. It is therefore a process that is recursive and generative in nature.

D: You got me thinking why are they (students) behaving this way? How can I motivate students? So I started to think I know they like me as a person but I went in there thinking: Okay here's the French program, I'm the teacher, you (the students) have to listen to me and I'm gonna teach it (French curriculum) to you. The programme was dry and boring and the students would talk and start screaming. I thought this is wrong, something's not working here, we're not bonding, what is the root of all of this (spoken emphatically). I thought I had to teach the programme but now I've changed it. Since I changed it (approach to French) the students are writing French poetry for me even the needy kids. I've never had that kind of response from intermediates, they're really cooperating and working with me (Debbie, p. 84). ¹⁰

Debbie's problem: "... why are they behaving this way?" signals the initiating impulse – the "dissonance" – that effectively compelled her to search for a solution. Due to observations situated in a practical need (being in control) Debbie was invited to reflect on the premise of her problem "...what is the root of all this?" Our conversations acted as a catalyst, which continued this movement toward resolution of her initial problem: "You got me thinking." Possible hypotheses were considered by way of explanation for probable causes: "So I started to think I know they like me as a person, but."

¹⁰Data segments are used liberally throughout to contextualize teachers' comments and my interpretations. When possible, data specific to analysis and interpretation are marked in bold face to facilitate the reader's understanding and referral to the original source.
She began to recognize that her need (control) presents a problem that simultaneously provides an answer: "we're not bonding." Through a process of elimination (deductive reasoning), "I know they like me as a person" and through our discussions and her inquiries (explained elsewhere) she recognizes her contribution to the class dynamic. Debbie's attitude, "I'm the teacher, you (the students) have to listen to me," and her approach to the curriculum and programme as expressed in pedagogy, "I'm gonna teach it," were the source of her problem. Its consequences were expressed as student resistance in the classroom. In this particular instance instrumental knowledge did not operate outside of communicative interests, rather it informed technical endeavours: "instrumental learning occurs within a context of communicative learning; most learning involves both instrumental and communicative aspects" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 80).

Furthermore, a recognition and confrontation of perceived barriers, "I thought I had to teach," had a liberating effect: "but now I've changed it." Ongoing observation and student feedback served to confirm her initial hypothesis "the students are writing French poetry for me." This procured what she desired but had not previously attained because of student resistance: "I've never had that kind of response... they're really cooperating and working with me." Buoyed by her success she continues to plan and make further changes: "So one day a week I'm actually considering maybe doing it two days a week 'cuz one day I can't cover enough."

Goals that emerged from a personal and professional need precipitated a change in thinking and language. The feedback obtained reaffirmed her observations, and the changes made empowered Debbie to initiate further changes, consequently viewing herself as a professional able to articulate and
justify her practices. According to Mezirow (1991) problem-solving is critical to all forms of learning as defined by elaborated, new, and transformed understandings. Clearly evident was the ability of a portfolio process to sustain Debbie’s learning as she actively looked into the causes of and solutions to her perceived problems. The problem-solving process described above is illustrated in Diagram 1. These findings support Mezirow’s position that problem-solving is critical to transformative learning. The problem-solving and learning process (outlined in Diagram 1) that Debbie experienced confirms Mezirow’s description of this process. He locates the initiating impulse for this process in a “doubtful or problematic meaning scheme” followed by “exploring, analyzing, remembering, intuiting, imagining. Scanning in turn leads to propositional construal, imaginative insight, and making a new interpretation” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 95).

Thus, what began as a problem compelled Debbie to search for answers that resulted in enhanced awareness, and elicited a “change” in her thinking, her attitude, and her practice. When participants actively engaged in problems of practice, a change in their thinking, reflected in language that was markedly conjectural, also occurred.

*Debbie: I think with the intermediates I might do two days of grammar and two days of literature. Maybe the plays are great for the younger ones but I think the older students need more grammar. What if I team the other classes I can do it three days* (Debbie: p. 105).
The following generalization is based on a description and analysis of the problem-solving process used by Debbie and supports the work of Mezirow (1991). Practitioner's needs arise from multiple sources situated in personal/professional interests. Problems are expressed as goals and pursued through a portfolio process of inquiry. Once identified, strategies are generated to provide a sense of direction and a point of reference to gauge progress. Reflection vis-a-vis communicative modalities (reading, writing, speaking, listening, observing) reveal meaning structures that serve as filtering mechanisms for understanding and support changes in consciousness. Heightened awareness is a precondition for learning that incurs transformations in understanding that subsequently (may or may not) be manifest as changes in thought and actions. Continuous observation, reflection and feedback received from various sources inform the initial hypothesis and the resulting actions taken may lead to further changes. This process is recursive and dependent on the ever changing needs of the learner and his/her environment.
Finally, one of the by-products of reflection were thoughts in the form of questions: "I guess I have to...," "Maybe I could...," "I wonder if...," "What would happen if...?" "How can I get them to love the subject?" "I've been tossing this idea around," "I'm thinking of...," "I need like a...," "Could it be changed...?" "So, maybe what I can do is..." These last three indicated creative problem-solving around perceived systemic, programme and/or personal barriers. Consider how Debbie thought through her dilemma:

D: The program is very dull but I have to come up with a survey to find out what students' attitudes are toward the French programme. So... (Debbie, p. 83).

Having identified a problem, "The program is very dull," Debbie was compelled to a solution "but I have to..." A sense of active engagement in the process is clearly communicated. Establishing a direction for her planning, "How do I get them to," is the pressing concern that became Debbie's goal. In such instances reflection and self-evaluation are habits of practice rather than isolated skills to be developed. Such musings (questioning attitude) open doors to things previously unimagined and invite a whole spectrum of possibilities:

D: I thought about it when I was in the bathroom this morning. I thought I should do something with the literature, have students write stories, create big books for primary students, maybe a board game using the vocabulary. I have so many ideas floating in my head (Debbie, p. 202).

This snippet of dialogue communicates Debbie's renewed excitement which her own learning generated; a sense of euphoria accompanies her discovery. As well, the educators began to view themselves as "learners" questioning preconceived notions of "teaching" and "learning," both their
own and that of students:

L: Can you be more specific as to the benefits?
F: It has taught me a lot about myself, it's taught me about my teaching, about my own learning and that of students. I never thought about how I got to be the type of a learner I am or what stimulates me, my strengths, my weaknesses. I've never had to write them down and then choose for myself something that I wanted to improve upon (Fran, p. 34B).

Here is a realization that learning is on-going and vital to growth and that an educator (as a "whole person") is always in the process of becoming.

Participants' words reflected the language of "learners" actively engaged in observing, reflecting, planning, searching for alternatives to barriers, and acting on feedback. Participants spoke of new found "excitement," increased motivation, and a renewed sense of "desire" fuelled by their own learning.

Participants said they felt "better," "stronger," and had become more "confident" as a result of:
- an increased ability to articulate and justify their practice;
- support and affirmation by colleagues;
- positive feedback from students, parents and administrators;
- changes in self-perception;
- identified and achieved goals;
- acknowledging and expanding existing teaching abilities;
- identifying negative patterns and developing strategies to deal with them;
- enhanced feelings of accomplishment and professionalism, which ensued from this process and materialized as artifacts in the portfolio.

Speaking of the effects of her participation, Debbie viewed her development as impacting favourably on student learning. This verifies that curriculum, student learning, and teacher development are inextricably linked in teacher thought and action.
The portfolio process made me think of my reasoning for wanting to do this. It involves a lot of time and effort but the end result has been an improved quality of teaching, therefore, an improved quality of learning (Post Survey #7 Debbie).

Recognizing Biases

Resulting from this process was a recognition and confrontation of hidden biases and an increased awareness of the existing discrepancies between voiced beliefs and practice.

D: It’s so nice when you’re reading something to think of a student who doesn’t exist and then you think Lorenzo. I should be connected, be attached, try to reach him. I tried various techniques to reach him and not give up, that’s what the whole article is about and I did give up on him. I probably could have made a difference if I had tried but I put him off. I didn’t like his way (Debbie, p. 15B).

From such renewed understandings changes occur:

L: D’you think your insights will influence how you interact with students like Lorenzo next year?
D: I’m going to try (spoken softly) I’ll try not to give up on them, label them, try to include them more in our discussions. Well, it’s definitely made me think, it’s made me reflect and hopefully change. I have really come a long way. I really try hard to reach the intermediates (Debbie, p. 187).

Increased receptivity toward students and an openness to their feedback unveiled further biases, which served to democratize teaching practices.

Personal Philosophy

One of the most powerful effects evidenced was the formation of a personal philosophy grounded in and supported by classroom practice. Once established, more conceptualized understandings of classroom particulars
provided participants with an informed, critical perspective. They were less swayed by administrator viewpoints, board initiatives or fluctuating education policies. This is the source for participants' expressed feelings of "professionalism," "self-confidence," and "empowerment."

V: In this process you're supported by colleagues, you're able to make your philosophy clear. You can justify for yourself and to others what you're doing and why. You're able to focus on your goals and show your progress rather than being spoken to. Being able to question what others say or educational fads, and say, 'Does this make sense for my students?' (Veronica, p. 49B)

Affective Dimension

Participants expressed that this process was "healing," "purging," "cathartic," and "nurturing," affective aspects that may not directly impact on the professional but certainly address the needs of the teacher as a "whole person."

V: It's been a nurturing experience. I think we've all gained from having our needs acknowledged and addressed. We need to look at the whole person if we are to grow as teachers (Veronica, p. 55B).

A supportive environment creates a sense of trust. Teachers viewed this as critical in promoting their development. Supporting Mezirow's position, such conditions allow the risk-taking required of learners to inspire reflection of presuppositions relative to attitudes and opinions. It encourages discussion of, and openness to, different understandings and avenues.

V. It's (portfolio sessions) been acting as a support group and with any support group there's an issue of trust and confidentiality. People have said certain things and people have addressed those things in a thoughtful and sensitive manner (Veronica, p. 46B).
Participants spoke of the experience as being “worthwhile,” “fulfilling,” and “rewarding,” noting that the process addressed the needs they had originally identified – those that had drawn them to the study and the portfolio process and had made them persevere in their endeavours.

A teacher who compiles a portfolio must be open-minded to change which is a very difficult concept to many, including me. However, when you see the positive ramifications from the change then you realize how worthwhile is the portfolio (Post Survey #10, Debbie).

The success of this process was less in the actual construction of a portfolio than in the recognition and fulfillment of the learner’s “deep need,” desire for change, and open-mindedness toward exploration of the sources and consequences for current understandings of self, others and personal experiences. The portfolio process is effective in so far as learners garner meaning from it and meaning structures are changed in the process. The portfolio is not proffered as a panacea, nor is it meant to replace traditional forms of teacher assessment, but to broaden the scope of what is included and understood by such practices and enhance their potential.

Sustaining Transformative Learning

Role of Reflection

Reflection played a critical role in the learning process: “I learned that self-reflection is a necessary part of one’s professional growth. The portfolio confirmed my belief that it would provide the vehicle for that self-reflection.” Reflection was perceived as a “focused” and “thoughtful” consideration of assumptions to facilitate learner’s understandings, and the sources and consequences for interpretations and to serve as a vehicle for potential
reinterpretation. Communicative modalities enabled this process as they enhanced the learner’s reflective capacity.

L: Looking at things with a purpose?
F: The questions that you asked or the activities that we would be involved in had a purpose. And the purpose wasn’t just to vent, the purpose was to think about issues and the reasons for our problems and to actually take some action – whether it was reflective or active, I’m not sure (Fran, p. 28B).

Importance of Language: Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Language is the medium of reflection. It is mode through which we give meaning to events and experiences. Because sociolinguistic perspectives are saturated with social norms and cultural understandings. Reflecting on the presuppositions for our attitudes and opinions will unveil the social nature of our meaning-making. This was encouraged and supported by tapping into communicative modalities: speaking, writing, listening, reading, and observing. Each of these was perceived to have assisted with constructions and reconstructions of understanding that sustain learning. That lead to growth as witnessed by changes in teaching practices. The constitutive aspects of language are subtle, yet an increased awareness of how language allows, as it simultaneously limits, understanding, is expressed by Fran:

L: You were not aware of your framing of students or how you were valuing teachers?
F: No, but there are “labels” that I’m aware of now that I had never given a word to. So now that I have, yes (Fran, p. 30B).

Increased awareness of language and its influence on thought and
action is critical to renewed understandings which simultaneously open possibilities to change.

V: I'm very sensitive to language, for instance when students get into trouble they're labelled “bad” as opposed to making poor choices. Another time, we were talking about what makes an effective leader and someone said a leader should be able to share the power. I have trouble with the word power and I said, "What you're saying is you would like a leader who's willing to share responsibilities and give colleagues ownership over these initiatives within the school. I'm very aware of the power of language because language is a way of existence right? It's what you speak, so you walk the talk. That kind of philosophy.

D: You know I never really thought about it that way until you mentioned it (Veronica/Debbie, p. 121).

Promoting reflection on current understandings through reading, observing, writing and talking can lead to an “interesting way of thinking... of turning things around.” In the next section I consider how talking, writing, reading, observing, and listening can support transformative learning.

Talk

The importance of talk in the learning process cannot be underestimated. Fluctuations in the use of pronoun (from “they” to “I”) communicate changes in thinking and understanding. As one participant reflects on her constructs (set of beliefs):

L: Do any of the constructs you use to describe teachers surprise you?
C: To me it's almost like they or the adjectives used to describe the ideal teacher are descriptive (unclear) of those things that I—that the ideal teacher to me should be dynamic, energetic and nurturing (Cynthia, p. 4).
Cynthia indicated an awareness that "they" refers not only to the constructs and to the "other" encompassed by her use of the pronoun but its original source – herself, the "I" that she effectively constructs:

C: Well I threw mine (constructs) out in the air already (laughs). I'm dynamic, energetic, nurturing, (unclear) enthusiastic, dedicated (Cynthia, p. 4).

Debbie's change in pronoun reflects a shift in control from herself ("I") to students ("they"). A subtle change in her perceived role – as promoting learning rather than "teaching" – is also evident:

D: But those forty minutes that I'm in there the regular classroom teacher wants control, the principal wants control, the parents want to know that their child has learned something and I have to control them so that I can teach them. They have to control themselves – I have to help them control themselves and create an environment where they can learn. (Debbie, p. 25).

Also noteworthy was Debbie's reading of the class and her role, given that desired student behaviour is outwardly reflective of learning, and is filtered through the expectations (i.e., perspective) of others; parents, colleagues and administrators. In this way a polyphony of voices shape the teacher's expectations and her practices.

Through talk one is able to express, clarify, and justify a personal philosophy and to gain a sense of direction:

V: I was able to give voice to what's going on, whatever I'm struggling with. Others helped me to be more clear about things. I have more of a focus in continuing my journey and the portfolio makes clear my beliefs and I can support this with actual, tangible things. The portfolio acts as a documentation of what you say you do and it reflects your journey as a professional as well as your journey as a person (Veronica, p. 42B).
In conversation, new lines of thinking were opened, and alternate perspectives and hence possibilities, were entertained. Words, like seeds, took root which, as described earlier, lead to Debbie’s rethinking of the programme, her understanding of teaching and learning, and her reframing of “teacher” and “student.”

Through talk, contradictions between espoused views and practices are resolved, connections are forged, and new understandings emerge:

L: Has your metaphor changed?
D: I think so.
L: Think back to your metaphor of the classroom as a home.
D: Definitely, I keep shifting and changing, making room for all the students, even Lorenzo! There’s that story, The Mitten, you know that story, (nod in agreement) it just kept growing and growing and changing and everybody found a spot in that mitten (Debbie, p 91).

What Brenda described was not a change in metaphor but in the meanings she associates with it. Meanings (signified), not words (signifier), become freed from their “referent,” a distinction made earlier when discussing Masciale’s use of Vygotsky to describe new conceptual structures. Brenda’s renewed understandings of the classroom and those within it reflect a perspective inclusive of “all students,” including Lorenzo and those potentially like him. Talk procured an emergence of biases (fears and/or desires) that previously existed on a subconscious level. Once voiced they were brought into awareness and became difficult to ignore:

L: When did you become aware of this?
D: Just now, talking to you. I’m just flabbergasted with myself I’m thinking why did I help Carlo and why did I…. (hits table with open palm)…. drop Lorenzo? Because through the whole year I kept thinking he’s (Lorenzo) just like Steve. He would keep making comments to the girls just the way Steve was doing to me and he was making
me uncomfortable...(voice rising)....just like Steve was and I thought I'll fix him.
L: And you did that subconsciously?
D: I never thought about this till now. I can see the connections. Poor Lorenzo, he lost out on French because of me (Debbie, p. 188).

Talk elicits concerns around issues of practice and/or the naming of perceived inequities. In either case, having been voiced the issue no longer existed on a subterranean level, and once brought into the open its original source could be probed, understood, and, potentially, solved. Increased awareness of personal, social, religious, and political sources of problems conferred a greater sense of direction and control on the part of the interlocutor.

L: What was most helpful for you in this process?
V: The speaking, the sharing of ideas, giving voice to things that are important for me. To sit as a group and figure out what’s important to me and it gives me some direction. That was important for me, to actually give voice to issues I was dealing with and to hear myself say the words, that was empowering (Veronica, p. 46B).

Writing
Writing is the quintessential reflexive medium – it crystallizes, materializes, and mirrors back one’s innermost thoughts. Writing makes “evident” one’s teaching practices, that is, the rationale (values/beliefs) behind them:

F: I’m an ostrich, what I don’t want to see I don’t see or I’m not looking for perhaps. But when I reflected on the activities and I started to write it became so obvious (laughing). Like something hitting me over the head. This is how my career has developed and it’s a pattern that repeats itself. It might change slightly in different schools but I spent the first twenty years of my career in one school
and then after that I moved, more than once (laughs). That should have shown me an obvious pattern. So this has just been an education, the writing especially (Fran, p. 2).

Writing is a “helpful” strategy through which one can “deal with things,” and constituting a “cleansing;”

L: Do you find the writing beneficial?  
F: I think that my reflections are very cleansing sometimes. You get rid of some things in that way because you can get some distance, get a different perspective (Fran, p. 143).

In writing (and talking) about her educational history, Debbie recalled experiences as a student which enabled her to reframe the classroom from this viewpoint. Developing a subtle shift in perspective, she remembered having an “affinity for languages” but she can also “imagine if you don’t.” Recognizing that this may well be the case for students she teaches, she became more empathetic toward those for whom French was “really a struggle.”

Participants expressed that writing (deriving from the activities, and considered as reflective pieces) was thought-provoking and supportive of self-evaluation:

L: Being part of this process helped you to evaluate your practice?  
F: Yes, it made me think more about what I’m doing, how I’m doing it and what needs to change.  
L: Can you give me a specific example?  
F: Like this piece that we did on constructs about students or the metaphor, the writing produced concrete things that helped made me look in at myself (Fran, p. 29B).

A rather curious effect happened when thoughts were manifest in written form – ideas gained a new currency that elicited greater commitment
from the writer:

V: Once it’s on paper and you look at it, it’s written, there’s more of a commitment. So when we discuss it in our group it’s all up here (points to the air). Whereas when you write something on some part of the article that you feel strongly about, you rethink what you said and what you believe and then you make a commitment and put it into words. For me, words are very important (Veronica, p. 120).

A sense of permanency inheres in the written word that procured an uneasiness that is further compounded by a realization of its limits, its reductiveness:

V: So you’ve put your whole existence, you’re philosophy into words and you hope you’ve chosen the right words. That’s what I’m uncomfortable with, words can never fully convey who I am and my beliefs (Veronica, p. 130).

Writing acts as an aid to memory, materializes the thinking behind practices that would otherwise remain veiled and puts isolated aspects of practice into a broader perspective. It serves as a point of reference from which to “step back and take a look:”

L: Why would the tangible, concrete products be important?
C: It (entries) validates what I’m doing and having it on paper is helpful. You’re not aware of the things that you do or why and putting them in the portfolio brings it all together. You can actually see your progress and that encourages you to continue (Cynthia, p. 61B).

Writing “validates” experiences and confers “importance” to thoughts and commits the learner to action.

Reading
Each participant sought out literature related to her goals and/or was
provided with suggested readings. Accessing the literature in the designated areas of interest/concern served as a catalyst for learning through its ability to:

a) offer framings;

Liz: I was reading an article about librarians. This person had compared the library to a kitchen in a house. The kitchen being the focal point where people gather and discuss. I had never thought of it in that context and all of a sudden I realized the importance of a library and it changed how I saw my role as librarian (Liz, p. 10).

b) provide alternate points of view, suggest different ways of thinking;

D: This article by Glasser really had a different view and approach to dealing with behaviour. He calls it choice theory. It really made me think. It changed my whole way of thinking; you can't control students, they have to control themselves. It's made a difference in how I speak to students, my language, my way of thinking and dealing with them (Debbie, p.185).

c) affirm, challenge or teach;

L: Did some of the experiences described by Paley in Girls and Boys in the Dollhouse resonate with yours?
F: Very much so but some of them were completely the opposite.
L: Did it make you consider things that you hadn't thought of maybe?
F: Look at them, yes. Look at dynamics that I hadn't thought of (Fran, p. 149).

d) yield insights into the "other's," often silent, perspective;

D: This was great, (reads title of article): What a seriously at risk student would like to say to teachers about classroom management. This really made me think (spoken with emphasis) about what it's like?
L: Did it speak to Lorenzo?
D: Mmmnph...he's seriously at risk. It (the article) said you have to try to reach them and we do the exact opposite. Reading this (points to article) has changed my attitude toward Lorenzo (Debbie, p.186).
Participants claimed that readings offered strategies and provided insights and new understanding of issues related to their selected goals. Such engagements gave legitimacy to the practices or changes they initiated. Teachers evidenced increasing ability to conceptualize the thinking behind teaching and articulate new understandings as informed by theory and defended by practice.

Observation and Listening

In practice each of the communicative modalities are mutually reinforcing, though not nearly as distinct and often are seamless in actual operation. Talking, listening, reading, and observing, each serves as a reflective vehicle for making inroads into self-understanding. The type of insights gained (as renewed meanings) are not fostered by traditional forms of assessment. As confirmed by this study, they are important to sustaining teacher learning and development. Listening to and reflecting on so as to learn from the experiences of others, is a significant aspect of the portfolio process. The portfolio as discursive space invites articulation, clarification, justification, validation, and transformation of attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about self, others, and classroom (life) experiences.

L: Was there something in this process that helped you to reframe your colleagues in the way you describe?
V: I think the conversations, listening to the others: this acts as a reminder of the different viewpoints that are possible and reasonable given the explanations. You see differences in where others are in their life and how their life affects who they are but it also acts as a reminder that everybody in their own way is struggling to be a better person.
L: Did you feel this way before you participated in this process?
V: No. It's been different for me after hearing the different conversations and what's important to the others (Veronica, p. 52B).

V: Your presentations and the questions you ask, the things others say, the readings, the writing, all that generates a lot of thought, it puts things in a different perspective. It gives me a chance to step back and assess, think about what I do. A lot of times I'm just caught up with the process and when I sit here and listen to other people and to you (referring to me) I look differently at things (Veronica, p. 154).

In each of the examples cited: listening, talking, and observing invited further musings that lead to "reflective action" – if not in behaviour, then in thinking. Reflection through reading, talking, and writing leads to growth that results from changes in understanding that is equally an effect of language.

L: What aspect of the portfolio process do you find most promotes your learning?
D: The literature for me was very insightful especially in the discipline. I really learned a lot (looks through the indices of her portfolio) from writing the philosophy of education, the autobiography – reflecting on the entries I put in my portfolio, having to explain why I put this piece in the portfolio and how it shows my growth. That was real tough. All of it really, the reflecting, the reading, the talking, the self-examination, it's changed me. Talking to you and listening to the others it helped me to grow as a person and as a professional (Debbie, p. 4B).

Transformative Learning as Empowerment

Locus of Control

The portfolio as transformational locates practitioner interests, requisite knowledges, and modes of understanding centrally within the learning and development process. Reframing teachers as also being learners
actively engaged in pursuing problems of practice, effectively shifts the locus of control.

When teacher self-evaluation is supported, and assessment is integrated with and viewed as an opportunity for development, a resulting shift in the source (who) of validation and on "what" is being valued, occurs.

_D: For me there's a big difference in a principal assessing you and the portfolio process. The portfolio is like a narrative, it's written in the first person but in traditional assessment it's the third person. It's someone looking above. The portfolio is "I," "me" (repeats the word for emphasis), that (assessment written by administrator) would be Debbie or Mrs. so-and-so, looking at me from afar. In the portfolio I'm looking at me from within and its what I value, what's important for me_ (Debbie, p. 9B).

Debbie's words make explicit that the one who evaluates determines what is valued. The portfolio is teacher in the "first person." This self-representation confers a sense of control over the assessment process, as constituted and motivated by personal and professional needs. The portfolio is a "self-portrait" that disrupts as it displaces third-person constructions made by an external observer. The ensuing change in role expectations between teacher and administrator diminish the hierarchical power relations that exist between them (Graham, 1993).

Ownership

Similar sentiments are expressed when participants were asked to compare portfolio construction with traditional forms of teacher development. An enhanced feeling of ownership and control replaced feelings of passivity and receptiveness to others' knowledge:

_V: The portfolio acts as a method of personalizing your development because you invest the time, you decide_
what's important or what you need and you're supported by colleagues. You can make your philosophy clear, you're able to focus on your goals and reach them rather than being spoken to (Veronica, p. 49B).

As witnessed, when practitioners were framed as learners and their learning and development become the focal point that shaped and informed assessment practices, hitherto unimagined possibilities were open to discovery.

**Teachers as Agents of Change**

An increased sense of ownership and control over the assessment process lead to feelings of empowerment. From such feelings stemmed changes that reverberated throughout the classroom, especially as educators became more proactive in identifying and solving problems and in assuming a greater initiative:

*D:* I presented my portfolio to the principal, she was impressed. I felt really good that I was able to do that. I took the initiative and I went and showed her my portfolio (Debbie, p. 61B).

Spurred by the positive feedback and her enhanced self-confidence, Debbie became viewed as an agent of change within the school as she influenced the practice of her colleagues. Her questioning and pursuit of problems lead to an identification of school and systemic failings and programme needs, and she assumed an active role in its address.

*L:* Tell me more about the “French Connection.”

*D:* I'm going to send out flyers to schools in this superintendence inviting French teachers to meet and exchange ideas. The problems I have with the French programme, the changes I've made, and the positive feedback I've received made me think of creating what you've done here for French teachers. They can come together and exchange ideas because that doesn't exist.
So I'm going to start this in the fall (Debbie, p. 98).

Reaching out to other colleagues in the school, across the superintendency, and potentially the system, produces a networking that creates a collaborative culture that can potentially change practices and policy.

Democratization of Teaching Practices

As the portfolio serves to democratize assessment practices for educators it equally procures changes for students. Such liberating experiences for educators served to invite reflection not only on student assessment practices but on how the teacher was “valuing” her students. The practitioners’ increased receptivity to student feedback, recognition of personal biases, and solicitation of student involvement in curricular decisions, made students equally empowered.

One of my goals is... to make students take more ownership in resolving conflicts.
One specific thing I have done in moving toward this goal is... more class meetings – allow the children their voice.
A change that has resulted in my teaching is...more class meetings – students are more invested in the process.
Some evidence that I have made that change is... children share the responsibility of behaviour management.
When I made the change this is what happened... my students seem more eager to tell others in the class what is appropriate – I'm not holding all the responsibility (Veronica, Post Survey).

Overall, participants expressed a feeling of increased control over their professional and personal life.

Transformative Learning as problem-solving

Critical to portfolios as transformative learning is “problem-posing”
(rendering the familiar problematic) and problem-solving. This involves an understanding of the sources and consequences of the problem or need and a search for alternative meanings that are more inclusive of experiences. As participants searched for solutions to questions situated in practice, a distinct progression was observed. This progression defines the learning process.

D: You got me thinking why are they (students) behaving this way? How can I motivate students? So I started to think I know they like me as a person but I went in there thinking: Okay here’s the French programme, I’m the teacher, you (the students) have to listen to me and I’m gonna teach it (French curriculum) to you. The programme was dry and boring and the students would talk and start screaming. I thought this is wrong, something’s not working here, we’re not bonding, what is the root of all of this (spoken emphatically). I thought I had to teach the programme but now I’ve changed it. Since I changed it (approach to French) the students are writing French poetry for me, even the needy kids. I’ve never had that kind of response from intermediates, they’re really cooperating and working with me (Debbie, p. 84).

As noted earlier, the initiating impulse for learning arises from reflection based on observation and is situated in a personal and professional need. This is formulated as a question, problem, or goal and personally experienced as Debbie considered, “How can I?” Her consideration of perceived barriers (personal and/or systemic), “I thought I had to follow the programme,” reproduced misconceptions in her understanding (“problematic meaning schemes”). Once voiced, these problematic construals were brought into conscious awareness and it was only then that she began to entertain possible solutions. Many of those solutions arose from her personal strengths and interests “I really love drama... I have a passion for it.” At this stage what began as a problem at a conceptual level became filtered into practice, “but
now I’ve changed it.” Observation, combined with feedback, confirmed her hypothesis concerning the underlying causes of the problem: “Since I changed it... they’re cooperating.” On-going observations and continual feedback lead to other changes that created a recursive cycle (See Diagram 1).

D: I’m going to hand out a survey to see how they feel about the French programme and what I’m doing. Depending on the feedback I’ll make changes (Debbie, p. 48).

Given that needs constantly change and practitioners, not unlike students, learn through trial and error this cycle is in continual flux:

F: I’ve made a lot of mistakes but I’m already thinking how next year I’m going to put fewer books out. After seeing how it operates this year with the group now I’ve got a science basket for instance but I’m finding that a lot of kids are sneaking over to the big books because they don’t want the science basket. So it’s constantly changing as I’m learning, and learning through the process of what I’m thinking (Fran, p. 54).

A change in awareness (personal consciousness) is antecedent to changes in actions and is a pre-condition for transformative learning:

D: Carlo was the same at the beginning of the year just falling down by the wayside but for some reason, I don’t know why, this must be a personal bias that’s reflected in my teaching and the student.
L: When did you become aware of this?
D: Just now, just now talking to you. I’m flabbergasted with myself, I’m thinking why did I save Carlo and why did I....(hits table with open palm)....drop Lorenzo?
L: You did that subconsciously?
D: I guess I did. I never thought about it till now.
L: Will this insight affect how you interact with Lorenzo?
D: Yes, I will not give up. I will try to work with him because he really did have the potential. He does have the best pronunciation and it’s a such a shame that I let it go (Debbie, p. 188/189).
On a personal dimension and at the level of thought, transformed understandings manifested themselves in actions:

L: You said you've made changes since you've been part of this process. Can you describe them?
C: I've made changes but these stem from the changes that happened in me, in my understanding, and then they go through the programme. I'm starting to assess what I'm evaluating when I evaluate the children (Cynthia, p. 20B).

Critical to this process and the maintenance of the cycle was critical reflection (See Diagram 2).

D: I stood back and I observed and reflected. Then I changed (Debbie, p. 90).

As indicated earlier, reflection and observation do not remain only at the level of thought, but the changes in understanding are acted upon and are manifest in practice. Reflection leads to increased awareness of thoughts and motives which underlie practices.

Reflection, as supported in a portfolio process, assisted teachers in connecting thought and actions when previously actions were driven by "instinct" (it "felt right") or a hit-and-miss approach ("just aim for better"). More "conscious and conceptualized" understanding of practice were also evident:

L: Are you saying that before this process you weren't aware of which concepts were being applied?
F: That's what I'm saying, I didn't know that what I was doing was actually connected to some theory or concept. I couldn't explain it in those terms. I only knew that the results were there, that it felt right, it worked well, but I couldn't explain it (Fran, p. 31).

Participants felt that reflection on past experiences was pivotal to their learning and development in that it provided inroads into knowing
Reflection as Catalyst in Problem Solving Process

The interconnections between interest, knowledge, and reflection make the personal inseparable from the professional. Reflection on past experiences (See Appendices I to L) increased awareness of how the personal is imbricated with and manifest in teaching practices through an unveling of personal biases and an interrogation of taken for granted assumptions. These insights provided direction for future actions, particularly as expressed in the form of hopes, desires & aspirations: "I want to be a better educator...a better person" (Debbie).

From an analysis of the findings I concluded that reflection leads to increased awareness and produces transformed understandings that are manifest in actions. Heightened consciousness is antecedent to changes in practice.
themselves as persons. This is a pre-understanding viewed as essential to gaining insights into who they are as educators and learners (See Diagram 3).

J: I feel that who I am as a person is part and parcel of who I am as a teacher. Who we are and how we live our lives is reflected in the choices that we make. So I thought by exploring this particular theme through my portfolio it would help me to become a better person as well as assist me in my teaching. So that’s the premise I used to select my goal (Jerri, p. 63).

L: It’s (portfolio process) given you increased awareness?
F: That’s what this whole process has done. It’s the awareness that’s the most important thing that I’ve gotten from this (portfolio process) – a lot more awareness about myself – and it crosses over to my awareness of other people and in the situations that I find myself, within the classroom and even in how I’m dealing with things. It makes me understand that there’s a word for what I’m doing or there’s a method that other people have tried that I’m applying that I now am aware of. It’s increased my awareness about the ideas that I was sort of oblivious to before this. It certainly made me aware of my own isolation, it just broadened my view of my past and my present (Fran, p. 60).

Furthermore, transformations in thinking were evidenced by changes in language that were then reflected in actions. This does not imply that thought is separate or distinct from language but that language (like action) is an outward manifestation that signals and confirms changes in understanding.

Evaluating the Portfolio Process

Practitioners are generally assessed according to pre-established performance criteria that seemingly do not take into account or reflect the lived reality of the classroom. It is critical, therefore, given that the intention of the portfolio experience is to situate the practitioner centrally within that
process to ask, what criteria participants use to gauge their growth. And by extension, we need to question the efficacy of the portfolio process. In the professional-pedagogical area, participants cite the following:

- moving toward and achieving identified goals;
- clarification and conceptualization of practice through the portfolio process;
- artifacts as points of reference to view growth/changes in thinking;
- transformations in understanding, changes in practice;
- the alignment/correspondence between expressed beliefs and practice: “I walk my talk”;
- enhanced critical reflectivity, openness to different viewpoints.

In the personal and affective areas teachers spoke of:

- “increased confidence,” “stronger educator,” increased assertiveness;
- “positive feelings,” “happier,” “sense of fulfillment,” “rewarding”;
- increased meta-cognitive awareness.

Unanimous in their view, participants held that “on-going observation,” “self-evaluation,” and “reflection” needed to become fundamental habits of practice. This is germane to change which itself is a criteria used to determine growth. Changes in participants’ views validated the portfolio process and sustained teacher growth as a “conscious and conceptualized” understanding of self and practice.

L: Do you feel that the portfolio has supported your growth?
C: The portfolio ties all the pieces together. I guess observation comes first – what are some of the problems or concerns? – and then come your goals. From there you work towards the goals through talking to others, writing and reading. That is the portfolio process (Cynthia, p. 16B).

Summary of Findings

General observations from analysis of the data reveal that intentions (learner interests) for pursuing portfolio construction weigh significantly in
its content and organization, and figure prominently in the learning process. Learner interests are informed by personal and professional needs and are expressed as fears, hopes, and desires, which influence goals and give direction to areas of inquiry. Learner "needs" and "expectations" are culturally shaped and influenced by political, religious and social factors that serve to make a portfolio as much a biography of its creator as it is a historical-cultural artifact. Findings confirm Mezirow’s (1991) claim that reflection can lead to significant changes in understanding (as transformed meaning perspectives) when focused on learner’s presuppositions regarding assumptions and the premise of the problem. Finally, problem-solving is critical to learning as transformation.

As demonstrated in this study, when practitioners actively engaged in problems of practice they were compelled, as driven by “needs” and revealed in their language, to search for solutions. This search was a movement toward knowing and understanding which is the essence of learning - itself a sign of growth.

The data showed that a teacher’s quest for solutions to problems of practice produced refined and altered understandings. They achieved this through observation, reflection, and renewed interpretations of selves and others as situated in and influenced by personal history and changing sociopolitical contexts. Furthermore, when provided with opportunities for professional dialogue, in which an open and free exchange of ideas occurred – a colleague’s comments, questions, explanations or hypotheses, served as a catalyst that generated further reflection.

Participants felt that a supportive environment was essential to their growth. I observed that teachers were more inclined to take risks, and in
doing so became more predisposed to new learning as a refined, elaborated or transformed mode of understanding.

From my analysis I concluded that the portfolio process raised awareness of individual strengths and learning styles, and produced a renewed perception of the relation of part to whole. It also developed an ability in participants to integrate concrete and abstract thinking, and an awareness of how to compartmentalize and generalize their reflections and to perceive how they shape practice. Personal investment (sense of ownership) in the learning process and over the selection of products generated was critical to advancing and supporting practitioner learning. The portfolio process, conceptualized as transformative learning, situates learner interests and knowledge centrally in the learning-problem-solving process, and this established a sense of personal investment (See Diagram 4). The portfolio process promoted heightened awareness. This resulted from reflection on the sources and consequences of understandings and was mediated through communicative modalities. Increased awareness led to transformed understandings that elicited "reflective action" (This did not necessarily result in behavioural changes). The importance of communicative modalities – writing, talking, observing, listening, and reading – as vehicles for and sources of reflection was particularly noted. Each provided inroads into the learner's meaning-making structures. To this end, participants viewed both process and products as important, particularly when thoughts that motivated teaching acts and previously operated at a subconscious level, became materialized in "form" (expressed verbally or otherwise) and placed within a comprehensive structure of meaning. The realization of understandings (beliefs, opinions, attitudes) behind teaching acts (including
The portfolio process is invested with the personal and professional needs and interests of the practitioner. Learner interests assume corresponding forms of knowledge and require different processes of learning. The portfolio process situates adult learning and development in a problem solving context. Reflection of the presuppositions of assumptions and premises enhances awareness of biases, beliefs and values that invite new, expanded and transformed understandings.
an awareness of the acts themselves) invited a revaluing of such acts. Teaching acts once perceived as insignificant assumed “value” when brought into awareness. Such consciousness of actions (of the beliefs and values that give rise to them) that hitherto remained at a subconscious level could now be integrated with more conceptualized understandings. They could be brought into greater alignment with expressed beliefs. Reflection led to enhanced awareness and sustained changes in understanding which preceded changes in practice. Heightened consciousness is a precondition for learning and development. The degree to which the portfolio process is experienced as transformative depends on the learners’ “readiness” and their openness to alternative perspectives. This finding supports Mezirow’s position.

Findings showed that when teachers are regarded as learners, and then supported as such a renewed enthusiasm and an elevated confidence is apparent. Likewise, an increased ability to articulate and justify practices and the development of a personal philosophy that is informed by theory and situated in practice is evident. Such effects were observed to create a thriving learning environment for both educators and students. These findings are indicative of the potential of this process to sustain communicative competence.

Based on these findings I assert that portfolios promote and support practitioner self-assessment as a habit of practice. This effectively shifts the locus of control (and the criteria for teacher performance) from administrators to teachers, with teachers assuming a central role in the assessment process. In this way personal accountability supersedes system accountability. Equally supported by the portfolio process, and resulting from on-going self-assessment achieved through increased reflectivity, is a
recognition of personal biases and a transformed understanding of the nature of teaching, learning, curriculum, "teacher," and "student." Such changes were noted to democratize practices for students. As teachers actively engaged in practical problems (motivated by communicative and technical interests) they effectively became agents of change at both the school and system level. Portfolios enabled teachers to discuss issues and gain support, particularly at a time when the educational landscape is in the process of being radically redefined.

The portfolio process was seen by participants as promoting their learning and development and as redressing failings in current assessment practices. As well, teachers claimed that portfolios provide a "structure" and process through which an espoused theory (assessment policy) translates from the page into practice, thus bridging this long-standing divide.
CHAPTER FIVE

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, assessment practices need to be reconsidered in light of teacher dissatisfaction (Murray, 1992), educational restructuring (Little, 1993), professionalization of teaching (Haertel, 1991), and recent theories of adult development and learning (Brogan, 1995). Traditional forms of assessment focus on teaching as exclusively technical. Established as standards for assessment and development, professional competencies are characteristic of educator “know how.” This narrow focus fails to consider other forms of knowledge relevant to educator needs.

A review system is generally comprised of summative and formative approaches. Summative forms of assessment respond to the need for system accountability; while the desired outcome of formative approaches is promoting teacher development. Given this focus, assessment practices need to be situated in theories of adult learning and development. Using Habermas’ conception of knowledge as informed by human interests, Mezirow articulates a theory of adult learning and development that recognizes (in addition to instrumental-technical interests), communicative and emancipatory needs, and requisite knowledges. Communicative knowledge is concerned with understanding oneself, others and our experiences. Understanding is achieved through meaning structures, while meanings which inhere in these structures (words) do not have a direct correspondence with their referent but are primarily associative. Meanings are both personal and social. The learning process for communicative learning is metaphoric-abductive and reflection is critical in its development.
Critical reflection of the presuppositions that inform our meaning-making structures – expressed as expectations, needs, desires, fears, opinions and attitudes – are essential to communicative learning. Communicative competence calls on the learner’s ability to articulate and justify claims to support practices. Teacher evaluation must consider communicative interests, such that knowledge and its development and subsequent demonstration, may be seen as evidence of professional competence.

Looking at the sources and consequences of learners’ understandings is germane to its transformation – itself the source of learning and development. Transformed understandings vis-à-vis meaning perspectives both constitutes and empowers transformative learning. This produces a sound basis for adult development. Using transformation theory as a theoretical framework to articulate a view of portfolios, assessment can be reconceptualized as development and as transformative learning. The portfolio process can account for and sustain learners’ technical, communicative, and emancipatory interests and knowledges; these lead to teacher development as transformative learning.

This study examined the potential of portfolios to sustain development as transformative learning. It conceived professional competence as inclusive of communicative, emancipatory, and technical interests. The portfolio process was organized around four main vehicles that served as sources for data collection: reflective activities, group/individual sessions, written peer feedback, and readings in chosen areas of inquiry. A descriptive case approach was used. The portfolio and reflections of one participant were analyzed for meaning structures and changes in understanding. This analysis was extended by comments provided by the three other participants. The
interpretation of texts derived from the sources described above combined narrative, semiotic, and deconstructive analyses.

Reflecting on the organization of the portfolio process, teachers indicated that each vehicle used to promote teacher reflection on presuppositions of understanding was helpful, but that a combination of reflective activities and group discussions was particularly useful in eliciting insights that resulted in "reflective action." Goal-setting and its attainment, as documented in the portfolio, was a source of pride and achievement and promoted the teachers' sense of professionalism.

This study revealed that each of the participants viewed her participation in a portfolio process as promoting her development in these particular ways: increased self-confidence and self-esteem, a greater sense of empowerment and personal ownership over the learning-assessment process, improved collegial relations, better student-teacher rapport, improved teaching practices, enhanced student learning, and an increased sense of professionalism.

These findings support the literature reviewed in Chapter two, also corroborating the work of others (Wolf, 1991a, 1991b; Graham, 1993; Edgerton, Hutchings & Quinlan, 1991; Fisher, 1994; Barton & Collins, 1993; Wheeler, 1993). Conceptually this study expands the current understanding of portfolio use for the purposes of professional development vis-à-vis transformation theory. It does so by providing a comprehensive framework that conceptually links adult interests, forms of knowledge, processes of learning, and the role of reflection in adult learning and development. More specifically, adult interest is integral to all learning, and when situated in a problem-solving context, and, thus, is personally and practically motivated, such interests
assume and require varied forms of knowledge and corresponding processes of learning. Critical premise reflection is vital to communicative interests and forms of knowing and leads to learning and development when new, refined, elaborated or transformed meaning structures result. Connections such as these were not clearly established in the portfolio research reviewed. While Athanases' study confirms that portfolio construction and social interaction enhances reflexivity through its cultivation, acquisition and demonstration as "the foundation of" teacher development, I believe transformation theory clarifies and extends understanding of how portfolios can promote critical reflexivity in support of teacher development. Thereby, they can provide direction for further research. Where this study contributes and varies significantly from those reviewed is with respect to (a) a conceptualization of portfolios that is directed at and supports practitioners' varied forms of knowledge, and (b) the role of reflection (or metacognitive ability), which is not in itself the desired goal or index of learning, but rather, a vehicle for "appropriating a new or revised interpretations of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 222). Thus, in response to Athanases' question regarding the degree to which "structured reflection accompany the portfolio as a collection of artifacts," the key to growth is to be found in the object or focus of reflection. By raising awareness of the medium through which such reflections occur (meaning perspectives), it is possible to acquire new, refined, and transformed understandings which enhance classroom practices.

Furthermore, based on analysis of the findings, it is evident that a portfolio process sustains teachers' development of the following: an enhanced awareness of sources and consequences of needs, biases, patterns of
behaviour, contexts, and self-perceptions. It produces a metacognitive understanding of how teachers learn and think about their practice, an ability to articulate and justify (rationalize) the particulars of practice conceptually, and a transformed understanding with respect to roles, students, curriculum, learning and teaching. These findings supplement existing research while confirming the efficacy of the portfolio process to support the development of metacognition (Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1994). They also vindicate teacher’s construction of their authority in the classroom as professionals (Masciale, 1996) and adduce teacher reflection and dialogue as sources of transformed understanding and growth (Athanases, 1994; Wolf et al., 1995).

Findings from this study also support concepts central to transformation theory: learning and development result from critical reflection of the presuppositions for assumptions, occur in a problem-solving context, and, connected to learner interests and forms of knowledge, result in more inclusive, integrative perspectives for making sense of self, others, and personal experiences. They also lead to an enhanced sense of empowerment, or “liberation.” The kinds of questions, issues, or concerns that teachers pursue, their openness to other viewpoints, their degree of reluctance to question “habits of expectation” and their overall “readiness” made the learning process more or less transformative.

Given that the findings from this study point to the efficacy of portfolios to promote teacher growth as new, refined, and transformed modes of understanding, it is suggested that boards of education, professional colleges, and teacher education programs should use portfolios in combination with existing approaches. The findings question the ethics of assessment practices that do not concurrently promote teacher development.
The potential of portfolio use for assessment and professional development is relatively uncharted. Further inquiries might usefully consider alternate ways of organizing the portfolio process to meet practitioner interests, school needs and system accountability. They could examine the development of activities that promote critical reflection on influences that shape epistemic, sociolinguistic and psychological perspective formation and effect its transformation. As well, research might look into the kinds of strategies that help to focus and facilitate group and individual discussions. Further research might also consider the role of individual communicative modalities as sources of and vehicles for teacher learning. It could examine how gender, institutionally described roles and professional experiences influence interests and the corresponding emphasis on technical and communicative forms of knowledge and their impact on the portfolio process as transformative learning. Moreover, while Mezirow claims that only critical premise reflection leads (and then not always) to transformed meaning perspectives, it should be further urged. Investigation should look into whether or not the pursuit of practitioner interests that are strongly instrumental, that is, focused on the content and process of a problem, can be made potentially transformative. Research could ask, How would this impact on portfolio design for teacher candidates who may initially frame practice as "how to" rather than "how come?" and How do these concerns impact on the role of the portfolio viewer or respondent as "empathetic provocateur?"

The findings from this study strongly suggest that efforts aimed at teacher development must recognize that while adult learning is sometimes about knowing more, it is more often, about knowing and thinking differently. Teacher learning is personally motivated by practitioner interests.
and practical needs, and should serve as the starting point for development rather than being a response to school board initiatives and political mandates. If educator interests are technical and equally communicative in nature then developing and using approaches that support critical reflexivity is necessary to the development of the latter. Therefore “how to” workshops may serve immediate, short-term technical needs, but such approaches do not acknowledge nor address the more pressing communicative concerns of educators. A portfolio approach responds to this need and fills this void.

Traditionally, forms of assessment often conclude and validate a learning experience, however, good ones consider both product (outcome) and process. A generative form of teacher assessment adopts a process whose outcome is personal growth and professional development. The portfolio is both a process and a product: the means to and a means of demonstrating communicative competence. Thus, assessment that seeks professional development should have as its desired outcome the acquisition and demonstration of communicative (and technical) competence, conceived as an ability to articulate and justify the particulars of practice. Such skill is indicative of competent professionals.

The portfolio process accounted for teachers’ technical, communicative, and emancipatory interests and it sustained development of the requisite forms of knowledge. Recognizing and sustaining these forms of knowing is critical to supporting teachers as professionals who, thereby, define and question “standards.” Barone (1996) suggests that teacher education (and on-going learning) should instill “a strong sense of professionalism.” He identifies three dimensions critical in its development: articulative, operational, and political. These correspond with interests,
knowledges, and processes central to transformative learning. The “strong (articulative) professional” can “engage in the kind of critical reflection that enables them to make and express informed judgments.” As competent and experienced professionals, educators can make informed judgments about the “quality of particular practices while abstracting from examples of practice to formulate defensible theoretical positions” (Barone et al., 1996, p. 1111).

Communicative knowledge and its learning process are dependent on critical reflection on the presuppositions which inform beliefs and attitudes so as to acquire more inclusive, integrative understandings (i.e., informed judgments). Citing Meyers, Brookfield (1987) maintains that being able to make such connections extends beyond an articulative capacity, such as “communicating facts and information,” but rather, involves “teaching perspectives for analyzing and making sense of information” (Meyers, cited in Brookfield, p. 82). As demonstrated in this study, the ability to articulate and justify the particulars of practice in light of renewed understandings and general principles leads to a heightened sense of professionalism. Stating a personal, educational philosophy, teachers are “professing... [the] nexus of beliefs [which] constitutes the articulation of an educational identity, the creation of a professional self.” Recall Debbie's transformed understanding of and approach to discipline and curriculum, which was confirmed through empirical observations and integrated into her new construals of self and students. Insights gained from a renewed understanding provided Debbie with a “platform” — “a clear sense of what kinds of schooling experiences can wisely be called educational (original emphasis)” (Barone et al., 1996, p. 1111). She could use this platform from which to defend changes in her views and practices despite the opposing views of administrators. It is conceivable that
our enhanced awareness of the “nexus of beliefs” which we experience as “vague attitudes, tentative beliefs, complex dispositions and incomplete understandings” provide an understanding of our “professional” self as a “whole person.”

On the operational level, judgments are not free from values and ideologies (sociolinguistic perspectives) which often “function” at a subconscious level. They are actively “operative” in our actions. A “strong professional” is able to recognize and bring into alignment “platform” and practice. This study confirms that a portfolio process as transformative learning can support teachers’ critical reflections on educator bias and can reveal the contradictions between espoused views/understandings and actions. This is aptly characterized by Veronica as being able to “walk the talk.”

In outlining a political dimension, Barone envisions teachers as educational leaders. As evident in this study, when teachers are given opportunities to freely discuss, question, and pursue practical issues, new directions are opened and changes that initially occurred within one teacher’s classroom can ramify out into other classrooms, the school, a superintendency and potentially, far beyond. The portfolio process described in this study sought to redress the power relations that inhere in traditional approaches to assessment practices. The shift in control over the learning/assessment process and the resulting products, affirmed educators as authorities in their classrooms. A heightened sense of empowerment can, as was witnessed in Debbie’s case, democratize educational practices for students. As a form of self-evaluation, the portfolio process invited critical reflection on self and teaching practices with a view to acknowledging
strengths ("I believe in myself as a teacher") and as a means of addressing weaknesses while supporting on-going learning and development ("have I been one of those teachers that have been slacking off or have I been doing my best... how have I changed?"). When educators begin to ask such questions such a process of enquiry promotes valuable forms of teacher assessment. It augurs well for the future quality of student learning. Such queries stem from personal and professional needs. Reflecting on their sources and consequences can lead to a renewed understanding that is more integrative of our personal experiences.

In this way, the portfolio process can support teachers as "principals rather than simply agents of others" (Barone et al., 1996, p. 1113) so that they can effectively challenge and change school practices and board policies.

The portfolio process as transformative learning supports teachers as "strong professionals" in their ability to articulate and justify an educational philosophy, to act on or "operationalize" insights gained from renewed understandings, and to establish themselves as educational leaders, creating the standards that will serve us well into the 21st century. The heart of teacher assessment should address the desires expressed by Cynthia: "It should encourage you to make some changes so that you can grow as a person and as a professional." Supporting changes in understandings, and conceiving portfolios as transformative learning, can do just this.

Recommendations for Practice

The unprecedented changes initiated by the Ontario Conservative government have curtailed, if not eliminated, the designation of resources (personnel, financing, allocation of time, etc.) for professional development.
Consequently, participants felt that portfolios can provide opportunities for focused professional conversations about practical issues. In its ability to present the full range of an educator's skills, attitudes, and disposition, the portfolio can be used as a heuristic tool during interviews for the purposes of advancement, and the acquisition of permanent contract status and teacher appraisal.

Portfolios give educators a structure to showcase strengths and celebrate successes. They provide a comprehensive framework for the "things" in practice that would otherwise remain scattered, disconnected, and thus insignificant. In recognition of, and as an incentive to them, educators who participate in a portfolio process, some form of recognition and/or acknowledgement should be considered for their focused efforts at on-going development. The portfolio process provides evidence of on-going professional development. Participants enhanced feelings of "professionalism" resulting from their portfolio experience make them potentially useful to the Ontario College of Teachers for teacher certification and in service development.

Portfolios can be used in schools and across the system to initiate and sustain collaborative cultures. As demonstrated above, when teachers assume initiatives that speak to local and system needs they become active "principals" of change. As part of a diversified assessment policy, portfolios provide a framework for peer mentoring, particularly between veteran and novice teachers. The portfolio as discursive space opens avenues previously unexplored, and allows "transformative" conversations to occur.

The pervasive use of portfolios in faculties of education, in in-service teacher courses, promotion/job interviews and teacher assessment practices confirm
their versatility, making their professional adoption an "asset."

The portfolio process establishes cooperative structures that can replace competitive alignments between colleagues. In this way educators can assume different roles within the group in accordance with their strengths. This diversifies the teacher's range of experiences and skills through effectively working with colleagues on jointly defined issues. The portfolio can be integrated into existing school and system structures through committees, divisional and staff meetings, and team planning. While the group process connects individuals through shared goals, it does not depend on group consensus, but rather, on strength in divergence.

Caution is needed with system or school-wide adoption of portfolios. As with many ideas, portfolios run the risk of being standardized, and thus unduly prescriptive in their use. When viewed by educators as an initiative "mandated from above," portfolios will no longer be a matter of choice, but will serve to change the quality of teachers' motivation in their pursuit. This is the very thing those supporting portfolios should resist, given their purpose in the democratization of assessment and teaching practices.

Having garnered many rewards from the portfolio process, participants would especially recommend it to those interested in personal and professional growth, that is, "change:"

A teacher who compiles a portfolio must be open-minded to change. This process can be difficult but not without considerable rewards. Seeing the positive ramifications from the change, you realize how worthwhile the portfolio really is (Debbie, Post Survey #10).

The further acceptance of portfolios by administrators and educators will inevitably produce unforeseeable uses as they reflect the needs and the
imagination of those, who in Debbie’s words, are “interested in [the] improved quality of education” and are willing to actively embrace it.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study support existing theories regarding the importance of portfolios as critical tools of adult learning. One of the effects manifested was an increased ability to think hypothetically and to seek alternatives to issues of practice. This orientation reframes the teacher as problem-solver. These positive elements are not only a condition vital to growth but but are also essential for future teacher development. Such views accord with “teacher as researcher” pundits who view educators as potentially contributing knowledge to the field of education, “grounded” within and legitimized by practice.

Furthermore, a precondition for learning is awareness and/or heightened consciousness. Reflection situated within a problem-solving context serves as an active catalyst in promoting and sustaining changes in understanding. These will lead to more inclusive perspectives, increasingly integrative of personal experiences. The portfolio process is informed by poststructural theory especially given the prominence of language in the reflective process and its importance in forming constructions and reconstructions of understanding. Equally significant, and evidenced in this study, is that transformation in thought-language (sociolinguistic perspectives) precede (but may not result in) changes in practice. Further research in the use of portfolios for the purposes of development will promote understanding of theories of adult learning, divergent forms of knowledge and processes of learning, and will vindicate their significance in
teachers' professionalization. The continued academic and professional dialogue about portfolios will especially inform conceptual theories which sustain "generative" and transformational practices in pre service education programs, and promote approaches to teacher assessment as development.
Appendix A

Informed Consent Letter

I am currently in the process of completing an educational doctorate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. As part of the research requirements for the Ph.D Program, I am undertaking a study that looks at the efficacy of portfolios in promoting the professional learning of educators.

Of particular interest to me is the potential that portfolios invite by way of personal and professional growth through collegial interaction, reflexivity, autonomy, self-evaluation and the transformations in teaching practices thereby made possible.

Specifically, I wish to explore how portfolios can be of benefit to practitioners, given the revised assessment document *Appraisal, Growth and Improvement* compiled by the Metropolitan Separate School Board. Documenting teachers' personal experiences and perspectives in the process of portfolio construction will provide further understanding in the area of teacher knowledge and pedagogy, thereby contributing to the field of teacher development and assessment practices.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may terminate your involvement in the study at any time and prohibit the use of any information thereby obtained. The information disclosed will remain confidential and every effort will be made to ensure anonymity. Information obtained from taped interviews, surveys, group discussions, portfolio conference sessions, classroom visits, etc. will be safely secured and disposed of following the completion of the study. The data collected will be used for the purpose of the specified study (a doctoral thesis) and, possibly, any subsequent work related to this topic. Feedback on the progress and results of the study will be given whenever possible and on request.

Should you have any questions regarding the nature of the study and your rights as a participant, please contact Professor Cameron at OISE (416 923-6641).

I, __________________________ am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project and agree to participate, given the terms outlined above. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

______________________________________________  ________________________________
(Signature of participant)  (Date)

______________________________________________
(Signature of investigator)
Appendix B

Professional Portfolios

Proposed addendum to the
Metropolitan Separate School Board
Appraisal, Growth and Improvement Document

Prepared by

Liliana Vani

1997
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In a school community premised on Catholic beliefs and traditions, our Board mission is to educate all children to their full potential in order that they may acquire the skills, attitude and dispositions necessary for active participation in society.

One of the main purposes of teacher evaluation is to ensure quality education for the children in our schools. Quality education is concomitant with effective teaching. The opportunity for teachers to experience continuous professional growth is therefore viewed as integral to and a part of this larger goal.

While evaluation of professional personnel serves a public need for systemic and individual accountability, it is primarily an "educative" vehicle that supports reflective practice, invites empowering leadership and promotes collaborative decision-making and collegial interactions.
Professional Portfolios

Introduction

The ongoing professional learning of educators is viewed as integral to the quality of teaching in evidence in our Catholic schools. The Board's evaluation process seeks to develop and maintain quality education by supporting teaching practices that enhance student learning, promote individual growth and invite self evaluation.

The professional portfolio aims at supporting teachers' professional learning as educators. Its use is intended to complement the MSSB Appraisal, Growth and Improvement Model hereafter referred to as AGI. This process recognizes that teachers are professionally competent, merit support, want to increase their professional competence and effectiveness, and are prepared to be accountable for their performance. (AGI: 1991, p. 3)

The professional portfolio seeks to provide teachers with a systematic means to document teaching practices in a variety of contexts over a period of time. It is a purposeful collection of selected artifacts arranged by and serving to present a portrait of the teacher. The portfolio captures the skills, attitudes and disposition of its keeper and speaks to the individual's integration of Catholic Christian beliefs into his/her overall teaching-learning experiences and professional capabilities.
Professional Portfolio

Portfolios: Appraisal, Growth and Improvement Processes.

Professional Portfolios may address and support the learning needs of all Board personnel throughout the ranks of the system.

Portfolios are particularly suited as:

- an extension to the three processes articulated in the AGI document, as a vehicle for supporting personal and professional renewal and learning;
- a means of documenting for purposes of accountability;
- a part of the process for promotion procedures, and a heuristic tool for use during interviews for positions of responsibility;
- a means of demonstrating effective practices for probationary teachers, so as to effect contract status.

For the purpose of evaluating teachers under the appraisal and growth process, the focus will be on promoting professional growth through the use of teacher portfolios.

For the purpose of evaluating teachers under the improvement process, evaluation will include clinical supervision as well as professional improvement through the use of teacher portfolios.

The intent of teacher portfolio is to:

- invite thoughtful inquiry into teaching practices;
- provide insights into teaching and learning over time;
- promote collaborative interactions;
- develop content and student-specific pedagogy;
- acknowledge, capture and support the scholarship in teaching;
- empower educators by altering role expectations that bring changes in power relations.
What is a Professional Portfolio?

A professional portfolio is a structured collection of evidence of a teacher’s work that is selective, reflective and collaborative, and demonstrates the knowledge, skills, beliefs and achievements of the teacher. (Wolf: 1991)

Portfolios represent an attitude that assessment is dynamic and provide insights into teaching practices as they grow and develop over time in authentic contexts.

*At the heart of portfolios are samples of teaching performance: not just what teachers say about their practice, but artifacts and examples of what they actually do* (Edgerton et al.: 1991).

Portfolios are a tool to communicate teaching goals, to summarize accomplishments and to convey the quality of teaching (Waterman: 1991).

Portfolios are reflective: entries are accompanied by commentaries and explanations detailing the thinking behind the teaching.

Portfolios are selective accounts based on key dimensions of teaching.

Portfolios contain the texts of teaching that form the curriculum of a teacher’s own learning.
Portfolio Contents:

A teacher is expected to maintain ongoing documentation of his/her work. The process of collection and selection is made by the teacher, in collaboration with a mentor/colleague.

Portfolio entries might include the following examples:
- unit plans;
- student assignments and written feedback;
- methods of evaluation;
- use of resources and out-of-class experiences; modification in programming to meet specific student needs;
- involvement in school/community activities;
- resolution of student conflicts;
- participation in committees;
- review of a commercial program and/or texts;
- implementation of effective strategies in promoting learning;
- critique of an article from a professional journal;
- reports on workshops and conferences attended, and course work completed;
- journal entries that describe inquiry into a specific area of curriculum and pedagogy;
- awards, publications, letters of recognition, evaluation reports, etc.

The teacher's statement of a personal philosophy of education and a curriculum vitae would also be worthy portfolio entries, as would a description of the teaching context from which and about which the entries are produced.

Portfolio entries may also be centred around personal and professional goals and/or "robust questions" in which the teacher undertakes intensive inquiry.

Attestations from parents, colleagues, students and administrators are also viable portfolio artifacts.

Reflection is essential to the teaching-learning process. Therefore, portfolio entries will include reflective commentaries that may assume various forms: reflective letter/responses, explanatory table of contents, discovery pieces.
Professional Learning Frameworks: Selection of Portfolio Entries

Educative forms of teaching can be articulated along several dimensions:

- contribution to the Catholic character of the school;
- management of the learning environment;
- utilization of teaching strategies;
- development of professional capabilities;
- cooperation and coordination of effort;
- interpersonal relationships. (AGI, p. 24)

Specific expectations and their respective indicators for each category are described in the AGI document (AGI, pp. 25-31).

Additionally, the reader is referred to:

Appendix A: Tom Bird: 1990;
Appendix B: Floyd Urbach: 1992;

These frameworks provide further guidelines for possible portfolio entries.

The dimensions described above are not meant to be exhaustive or comprehensive, but should be used as a guide for the selection of your entries. Educators are invited to include entries that may extend these categories; however, portfolio selections should provide insights into the strengths, achievements and ongoing personal and professional learning of the practitioner.
Portfolio Contents: Guidelines for Selection

Format:
The portfolio as a "container" may assume many forms. We invite exploration of these possible forms and do not wish to restrict the portfolio's shape to any specific format. Its structure, though, should be flexible and adaptable to the ever-changing and particular learning needs of the portfolio-keeper.

Selection:
The general areas of professional competencies in the AGI document and the frameworks provided in the Appendices should guide the selection of portfolio entries. A small selection of poignant artifacts that are representative examples from each category is preferable to the volume of entries.
The intended purpose of the portfolio (growth versus appraisal and improvement) will determine the selection of artifacts through which the portfolio may be construed as a display of "best" work or as a "working space". Entries should be accompanied by captions, reflective notes/letters or commentaries. In essence, the reflective components answer the following questions:

Of what significance is this entry to your learning as an educator?

How has the experience documented in the artifact contributed to your personal and professional growth?

How is this artifact reflective of your capabilities, given past and current teaching experiences, and the specific teaching-learning context?

The format provided in Appendix E may be used, as may any alternative that invites/demonstrates reflection on (and as it pertains to) practice.

Organization:
Portfolio artifacts should be organized so as to reduce random diffuseness; however, we seek to avoid a fixed rigidity.
Items in the portfolio may be arranged:
- according to themes;
- chronologically;
- according to categories;
- in a format reflecting the generation of questions and the trail of your subsequent inquiries.
Portfolios: A Culture of Professional Inquiry

Peer Responses:

In order to stimulate dialogue and support the professional exchange of ideas with other practitioners, individuals are encouraged to discuss and share their portfolio entries with a colleague/s or mentor. Mentors are invited to respond to the entries using the sample Peer Response Form (See Appendix D) or any variation thereof that supports a thoughtful exchange of ideas. Peer responses may, with the consent of the colleague/mentor, be included in the portfolio as a form of attestations and/or as indicators of professional growth and learning. Collegial relations may be formed according to professional interests and individual needs. Refer to AGI document, p. 15, for an indication of possible types of coaching relationships.

Portfolio Conferencing:

Portfolios may form part of the stages outlined in the professional growth process: self appraisal, pre-conference, observation/professional activity and post-conference (Refer to AGI: pp14-15). The preparation of a goal statement may form part of the self-appraisal process and is the instantiation of the portfolio's specific purposes, as articulated by the individual developing the portfolio. (Barton & Collins: 1993)

Portfolio-sharing sessions may be used for staff development, in sessions where small interdivisional (or interschool, interpanel) groups may discuss and share their entries, thereby generating a dialogue that sustains "... a culture of professional inquiry about good teaching". (Edgerton et al.: 1991, p. 6)
Portfolio: Right of Access

Portfolio Ownership:

The portfolio is the exclusive property of the individual who develops it. Other personnel may have access to it with the consent of the portfolio developer. Should any part of the portfolio become part of the teacher's "official file", all rights as described in Article 29 will apply (See AGI: Appendix 11, p. 56).

Ethical Conduct of the Portfolio-keeper:

Consent (verbal/written) should be obtained from persons whose letters/photographs/personal correspondence will be used as attestations that will be included in or will in any manner form part of that practitioner's portfolio. Additionally, where such consent is provisional upon the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, the portfolio-keeper will make every effort to abide by such requests.
References

For further information and reading the reader is referred to the following:


Appendix C

Preliminary Survey/Interview

Professional Portfolios

Please respond to the following questions and return this questionnaire to me at the next portfolio session.

1. For how many years have you been teaching?

2. What is your current assignment?

3. For how many years have you been in the present assignment?
   (a) How many years have you spent in the present school?

4. Why did you choose to participate in the project?

5. Are you familiar with the concept of portfolios for students? Educators? If so, please elaborate.

6. What evaluation track are you in currently?
   (a) Did you have input with respect to your placement?
   (b) How were you notified?

7. Are you familiar with the evaluation processes described in the AGI document?

8. Describe a recent experience with the assessment process, as suggested in the AGI document for that particular strand.

9. Do you find the current form of assessment growth promoting? Explain.

10. Describe the most recent professional development experience? What format did it take? Did you find this promoted your personal/professional growth?

11. What sources (journals, workshops, courses, etc.) have in the past and continue to promote your professional learning?

12. What concerns and/or questions do you have regarding the document Professional Portfolios and/or this study?

13. What is your purpose/intention in preparing a portfolio?

Please use a sheet of paper and number your responses.

Many thanks for your interest and participation in this study.
Appendix D

Reviewing the Portfolio Process

Please respond to the following and return this questionnaire for our last session in June.

1. The most rewarding aspects of preparing a portfolio are...

2. I would have liked more...

3. I would change/include...

5. If a colleague were to begin a portfolio, I would recommend...

6. The aspect of preparing a portfolio that I found most useful and I would recommend to a friend is...

7. The portfolio process made me re/think [of]...

8. What did you learn, what was confirmed, and what was challenged while compiling a portfolio?

9. The problems I encountered in compiling a portfolio were...

10. I would recommend (not recommend) colleagues to develop a portfolio because...

11. Was the process of developing a portfolio what you had expected/hoped it would be? Explain your answer.

12. Having participated in the portfolio process, complete this thought: "A portfolio is..."

13. I would (would not) consider using portfolios with my students because...

14. What informed your choices/decisions in selecting your portfolio entries?

15. What influenced your organization of these entries?

16. Which of the frameworks (if any) cited in the Appendices of the Portfolio Addendum was most helpful in guiding your selections?

17. What was your purpose in putting together a portfolio and did your intentions change over the course of constructing it? How did this influence your entry selection?

Please use a separate sheet of paper and number your responses.
Appendix E
Post-Participation Interview
Questions

1. What has your participation in a portfolio process done for you (both personally and professionally)?

2. Do you feel personally invested in your portfolio – is this element important to your development?

3. Does the portfolio process support self-evaluation? How? Does the process help you to think about what you do, why you do it, and set goals that lead you to make changes? Can you give a specific example?

4. What aspect of the portfolio process do you find most promotes your learning? How do you determine (measure) your own growth as an educator?

5. Did you find our group session helpful? In what way?

6. Did you find peer responses to your portfolio pieces helpful. In what ways?

7. How does your experience of a portfolio process compare with:
   a) your past experiences of evaluation?
   b) your experiences of teacher development?

8. Based on the experiences you’ve just described do you see portfolios as a viable means of transforming (and merging) assessment practices that support teacher learning/growth?

9. As part of an evaluation process do you feel the portfolio allows for a more inclusive (self) representation of your skills, attitude and disposition?

10. Do you feel the portfolio process is empowering? In what ways?

11. Since your initial participation, have your constructs about students/teachers changed? Has your teaching metaphor changed?

12. Complete this thought: I used to be a teacher who...... Now I am a teacher who......

Probing prompts:
What do you mean by......?
Give me an example of......?
Can you explain that for me?
How do you know......?
Appendix F
Portfolio Feedback Checklist

Your candid responses will assist further refinement of the framework used in this study so as to support future educators in their development of a portfolio. Also, your input will inform understanding regarding elements of this process that were particularly helpful in promoting your growth.

Place a check in the column that most applies.

<table>
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<th>Comments</th>
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<td>2. Significant Stories from Your Education</td>
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<td>7. Writing Philosophy of Education</td>
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Appendix F
Portfolio Feedback Checklist

Place a check in the column that most applies.

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<td>9. Strategies to Assist with Identifying Goals</td>
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<td>11. Reading Literature</td>
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<td>12. Viewing examples of teacher portfolios</td>
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<td>13. Bi-monthly portfolio sessions</td>
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<td>14. Peer responses to portfolio pieces</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Individual discussion of goals/strategies</td>
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Appendix G

Portfolio Presentation to Staffs

A Introduce Self - Who Am I?

B What am I doing professionally/academically?
Interest in teacher Assessment and teacher development;
Assessment process can be used to support practitioner growth through educator inquiry;
Professional Portfolios provide a structure for teachers to collect, select and reflect on their practices;

C Teacher Portfolios

What is It? (See Portfolio Document – Appendix B)
Contents of a portfolio? (Ibid)
Why start one? Motivation!

Why initiate a portfolio?

1. Investing in your personal and professional growth and as a means of enhancing your teaching practices;
2. Allows practitioners to set professional goals, document the process and assess their progress;
3. Supports a culture of collegial interaction through shared inquiry/dialogue;
4. Provides a structure for the growth strand of the AG1 Document and will form part of the teacher's assessment;
5. The Guidelines for Promotion Procedures is currently being revised, with portfolios assuming an integral component of this process – of interest to those in the appraisal track who are seeking alternate assignments;
6. The Ontario College of Teachers will require evidence of ongoing professional development - portfolios anticipate this requirement.
### Appendix H

#### Overview

**Portfolio Session Schedule**

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<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Focus/Topic</th>
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<td>Identifying Student Constructs</td>
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<td>Examining Teaching Practices</td>
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<td>Identifying Professional Competencies</td>
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<td>Process Portfolio – A personal example</td>
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<td>April 1/98</td>
<td>Group sharing of progress</td>
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<td>Exchange of peer responses, sharing of articles</td>
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<td>April 23/98</td>
<td>Group Sharing</td>
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<td>Progress update: sharing of goals and strategies</td>
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<td>Process Portfolio – Another example</td>
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<td>Frameworks for selecting/organizing artifacts</td>
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<td>Show Case Portfolio – A personal example</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>June 10/98</td>
<td>Group sharing of portfolio pieces</td>
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<td>Participant Feedback: Checklist and Survey</td>
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<td>Sharing of Portfolios-in-Process</td>
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<td>Final Comments</td>
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Appendix I

Professional Portfolios
Session #1

Agenda

1. Discuss intent of the study and ensure confidentiality —— distribute Letter of Consent.

2. Distribute Portfolio Document prepared for the Board.

3. Set dates/times for subsequent portfolio session.

4. Distribute Preliminary Questionnaire.

5. Discuss differences between a process portfolio and a showcase/interview portfolio.

6. Write an Educational Autobiography —— best/worst experiences as a student, significant teachers, defining moments that have impacted on your own teaching practices.

Distribute the following to assist with this process:
See Kochendorfer: 1994
Activity 2-1 (pp. 15-17), Activity 2-2 (19-23), Activity 2-10 (35-36).

If time permits, ask participants to think and record responses then share with neighbour.

For next session bring
Appendix J
PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO
Session #1

Strategy 2-2
Significant Stories from Your Education

This strategy is designed to help you recall an early event (one that occurred before you finished as a student) that was significant in your decision to teach.

For You

Write your first response to each item below. Jot down just enough words to identify the event so that you may refer to it later.

The specific event that pops into my head when I think of:

1. school –
2. teacher/professor –
3. classroom –
4. books –
5. learning –
6. evaluation –

The time I felt:

1. competent –
2. embarrassed –
3. stupid –
4. warm –
5. small –
6. praised –
7. hurt –

Put a check by those events that relate in some way to your decision to teach (even though the actual decision to teach may have come much later). Choose one or more of the checked events and write a story about it in some detail. How have these early experiences influenced your practice as an educator?

Adapted from Kochendorfer: 1994, pp. 15-17.
Appendix K

Strategy 2-3

This strategy is designed to reveal insights about teaching that have occurred to you since you became a teacher. The process may suggest new connections between ideas and events that you may not have linked before.

For You

As you remember your teaching experiences, avoid asking yourself, "Let's see. What is something that happened to me as a teacher that was significant to my understanding of teaching?" Instead, read and think about each of the following nine cues, jotting down just enough to remind you of the event that comes to mind.

I recall:

1. A time when I was surprised at how one student responded to me...
2. A time when I was surprised at how an entire class reacted...
3. A class period I wish had never happened...
4. An incident that was my baptism of fire...
5. The day I lost my innocence...
6. A time when I was forced to change...
7. A time when I felt a strong conflict between teaching and the rest of my life...
8. A time when I felt a strong connection between my teaching and the rest of my life...
9. My best hour...

Now look at each of these incidents. Which of these events taught you what teaching is really about? Chose one or more that gave you significant insights. What lessons were learned from this/these incidents. Write that story(ies) in some detail.

For Peer Respondent

As you read your partner's educational autobiography do any of the experiences described resonate with your own? Are there other lessons a teacher might learn from their story? The purpose in posing the question is not to find out if the writer interpreted the incident correctly. S/he did.

The purpose of sharing these experiences with others is for you to have the opportunity to see the incident from another perspective.

Adapted from Kochendorfer: 1994, pp.19-23.
1. Educational Autobiography

Purpose of an educational autobiography is to help “you [to] recall and reflect upon...specific past events that lead you to teaching. This focused remembering process is beneficial because the reason you became a teacher influences who you are now as a teacher. The varied and complex motives of good teachers have grown from unique collections of life experiences. Bringing these experiences to your awareness and reflecting on them will make you more conscious of exactly why you teach” and, more importantly, serves to make explicit motives that undergird pedagogy (Kochendorfer, 1994, p. 15).

Exchange your educational autobiography with a colleague. You may use the format provided in Appendix D or any other means you find helpful in responding to your colleague’s work. Please retain a copy of your “peer response” for your own portfolio.

2. Writing a Philosophy of Education

Each one of us has a unique set of beliefs, “constructs” that influence how we experience the world. These beliefs are influenced as much by our individual biographies as the cultural and historical period in which we are situated. The following activities seek to bring to awareness the constructs we have with respect to schools, teaching, learning, teachers, curriculum, students, parents, discipline etc. and should facilitate the writing of your philosophy of education.


Locating metaphors: Our beliefs often motivate our actions, however; we are often unaware of our beliefs. Looking at our use of language - how we describe events, situations, people can reveal our beliefs and what we value. Looking through your educational autobiography may help you to complete the following thoughts:
- I view teaching as... When I am teaching I see myself as...
- I perceive students as...
- I experience my best students as if they were...
- I view my most difficult students as if they were...
- When creating a learning environment I think of...
- I consider my colleagues as...
- I experience the subjects I teach/curriculum as if it were...
- My approaches to teaching can be described as...
- I experience parents (and the school community) as if they were...
- An effective educator is one who...
- My methods of discipline can best be described as...
- I consider student evaluation as... When providing students with feedback I...
- I am the kind of teacher who thinks/feels that education should...
- A school is like...
- As a Catholic educator, I view myself as...

Adapted from Kochendorfer: 1994.
Examining Teaching Practices

The following activities aim to assist you with locating/isolating areas of your teaching that will become the focus of your inquiry. Your selection of a topic for inquiry and its documentation is integral to your portfolio. Subsequent group discussions will guide and support you in this endeavour. This focus may emerge from pedagogical questions that perplex or intrigue you and/or personal interests, professional needs, teaching strengths or weaknesses that you wish to explore. Your topic(s) of inquiry represent the goal(s) you will pursue within the time frame of the particular strand in which you have been placed. Your focus may change and alternate questions or areas of interest may arise that may provide new directions for further inquiry.

Activity: Identifying Professional Competence: Strategy 3-2, Competence Continuum

Goals: Identifying Area(s) For Teacher Inquiry

For our next session clearly identify an area that will focus your inquiry. It should take the form of a question, goal statement and/or problem that is significant for you. The following suggestions may assist you with this process:

- Find concrete products generated from your practice (day plans, parent communication, student evaluations, attestations, student activities, etc.) that support your educational metaphor/philosophy and the teaching constructs you identified in Strategy 2-5. Are these strengths that you wish to build on by further refining your understanding? Are there products that challenge or contradict your stated beliefs? What factors account for these discrepancies? What actions can you take to address this?

- Revisit your educational autobiography and philosophy of education keeping in mind any comments made by your colleague. Were there similarities and/or differences in points of view? Can you locate areas of strength/weakness you wish to address i.e., literacy, mathematics, technology, student evaluation etc.?

- Keep a journal in the coming week/s and record instances when you experience some intense feelings in response to some teaching-related event. While some emotions may dominate try to tease out those that are not immediately apparent and are more subtle. Some possible words are: lost, angry, in/out of control, in synch with, pleased, rejected, dismayed, aware, fragmented, powerless, elated, stimulated, affirmed, puzzled, competent.
Appendix M

A sampling of themes from my own inquiries are:

- The role of drawing in the development of literacy;
- Changes in students' oral language given audience and its implications for pedagogy;
- Gender interactions in and out of the classroom;
- Gendered identity in children's literature (fairy tales);
- The role of talk in cognitive development.

Examples of teacher-based inquiry are:

- Improve students' understanding of the structure of the subject matter;
- Increased student participation in decisions about their learning activities;
- The role and place of homework in student learning;
- Broaden ethnicity of classroom work/literature;
- Issues of gender equity in the classroom.
## Appendix N
Portfolio Session # 4

### Goal Setting

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<th>General Areas of Interest or Concern</th>
<th>Specific Focus Questions Problems</th>
<th>Strategies/Plan of Action</th>
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Appendix O
Portfolio Session #5

Agenda

1. Set date for next session.

2. Schedule individual sessions to discuss area/s of inquiry.

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>Veronica</td>
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3. For our meeting please have a copy of:
   (i) Educational Autobiography
   (ii) Philosophy of Education
   (iii) Goals/Questions for inquiry

4. Group sharing of progress made thus far and/or problems, questions and concerns.

5. Jerri Noonan - example of a process portfolio (next session)

6. For our next session bring (or share) something that has resulted from your attempts to address your questions/problems/strategies.

Think about the active steps you are taking to address the area(s) you have identified and the strategies that will move you toward a deeper understanding of these issues so as to enhance your teaching practices. Document any feedback you receive and any resultant changes in your thinking, actions or subsequent questions.
Appendix P
Portfolio Session #6

Agenda

1. Set date for next session
2. Return Peer Responses
3. Exchange of items to which you want feedback
4. Distribution of articles/information
5. Discussion of goals and strategies
6. Jerri – Example of a portfolio

Portfolio Process:

As you reflect on past experiences, examine aspects of your practice and identify areas of concern and/or interest that you wish to explore you will gain confidence in your skills as a growing professional. The portfolio should allow you to track the process you use in pursuing your goals and will substantiate changes and refinements in your practice with evidence.

Think about the following:

If I could change one thing it would be....

Obstacles that keep me from making this change are...

This change would benefit.... because....

A creative way around the obstacles is....?

One thing I did to bring about this change is....

When I made the change this is what happened....

Next session bring in things to which you’d like feedback and be able to share with the group any of the steps you’ve taken toward your goal/s.
Appendix Q
Portfolio Session# 7

Agenda

1. Set date for last group session for this academic year.
2. Continuation of meetings in September ’98?
3. Schedule individual meetings for feedback on participation in study.
4. Information, progress and peer feedback exchanges.
   Distribute: Literature Response Sheet Appendix S
5. Show Case Portfolio: A Personal Example.

For our last session come prepared to share the beginnings of your portfolio with the group. You will need to think of a form as well as a means of organizing your pieces – you may find the frameworks listed in the Appendix of the Portfolio Document helpful.

Although the viewing of your portfolio by administration is at your discretion your participation in this study is recognized as serving part of your assessment and thus a request to view its contents and discuss the process may be forthcoming. You are encouraged to initiate this exchange and establish a time to share your portfolio with the administration in your school. Arrangement of this meeting prior to our final individually-scheduled discussion would provide another viewpoint on the efficacy of portfolios as an alternative form of assessment and as a growth enhancing experience.
Appendix R

Reflection Sheet: Progress on Goals

Think about the following:

1. One of my goals is...

2. One specific thing I have done in moving toward this goal is....

3. A change that has resulted in my teaching is....

4. Some evidence that I have made that change is...

5. When I made the change this is what happened....

Adapted from Kochendorfer: 1994, pp. 136-137
Appendix S
Literature Response

Title: ________________________________

Author: ______________________________

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<tr>
<th>What was affirmed? (I know/do...)</th>
<th>What was learned? (It made me think about...)</th>
<th>What was challenged? (I thought that...but...)</th>
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References


Toronto Catholic District School Board. (1992). *M.S.S.B. model for appraisal, growth and improvement in teaching practices.* (Available from TDCSB 80 Sheppard Avenue, North York, Ontario, M2N 6E8.)


