

Symposium: Establishing a Self-Study Group in a Faculty of Education

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Symposium Abstract

Self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) allows teacher educators to maintain a focus on their teaching and on their students' learning while engaging in scholarly practice. One of the defining characteristics of self-study is collaboration among teacher educators. This symposium focuses on a group of eight new tenure-track professors who meet monthly to study and reflect upon their experiences as teacher educators and scholars within their university. The first paper outlines the development of a self-study group, as well as the organizational framework for group interactions. The second paper examines a group meeting in which there was a rich discussion of the challenges of evaluating teacher candidates during a practicum using prescribed criteria; transcripts and reflections by group members are critically examined to identify group characteristics and dynamics. In the third paper, three group members critically reflect on the challenges of modifying long-established programs to better reflect their approaches to teaching their disciplines. This paper illustrates how sub-groups organically form to explore issues of shared interest through written reflection and face-to-face meetings. The papers in this symposium contribute to the self-study of teacher education practices by presenting evidence of how faculty can work together to build a collaborative culture that links teaching practice to scholarship. The papers contribute to research on the induction of new professors by providing a model of professional development that is self-directed, collaborative and empowering. The authors also consider the ways in which working in a "learning faculty" contributes to their individual and collaborative professional development.

(Three papers in Symposium.)

Establishing a Self-Study Group in a Faculty of Education

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Abstract

This first paper outlines the development of a self-study group, as well as the organizational framework that was in place for group interactions. The objectives of this self-study group were to support the teaching, scholarship and service components of faculty of education professoriate. The self-study group, consisting of nine pre-service education professors in their first, second or third year, met on a regular basis. As dyads and triads, members with shared interests corresponded with each other through written reflections. Studying our teacher education practices through self-study helped us to understand more deeply the complexities of teacher education and develop a collaborative learning community within our faculty.

Introduction

This paper details the development of a group of new tenure-track professors who are engaged in a self-study of their teacher education practices in the Faculty of Education at Brock University. The objectives of this self-study group are to enhance our teacher education practices and scholarship. There will be a description of the organizational framework for this self-study group and the ongoing maturity of the group as a functional whole. Our induction processes that we experienced as new hires and, particularly, the support that we have offered each other in the self-study group will be further explained. The second and third papers in this symposium probe further into specific facets of our work as a collaborative self-study group.

Theoretical Framework

In higher education, there is a growing recognition that teaching should be recognized as a form of scholarship. Hutching and Shulman (1999) argue that the scholarship of *teaching* is “the fourth of four scholarships” (p. 12), alongside the scholarship of *discovery* (pursuit of new knowledge), the scholarship of *integration* (fitting knowledge into larger patterns and contexts), and the scholarship of *application* (engagement with real world problems). With encouragement from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, many universities are developing the infrastructure to support professors researching their practice. Education professors, given the nature of our field of study, are well situated to take advantage of the opportunities for scholarship on *teaching*.

Self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) is a way for teacher educators to apply inquiry skills to reflect on their practices. Self-study allows teacher educators “to maintain a focus on their teaching and on their students’ learning” (Loughran, 2002), while engaging in scholarly practice. Self-study is a methodology characterized by examination of the role of the self in the research project and “the space between self and the practice engaged in” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). According to Bullough & Pinnegar (2001), it is through written reflection and teacher conversations that we negotiate the tensions between ourselves and our contexts, between biography and history. Self-study has proved highly compatible with other research methods as it has “used various qualitative methodologies and has focused on a wide range of substantive issues” (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001, p. 305).

In recent years, collaboration among teacher educators has become one of the defining characteristics of self-study (Lighthall, 2004). While self-study is primarily a personal inquiry, researchers benefit by working with collaborators who help them “step outside” themselves in order to notice patterns and trends in their work (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 14). Collaborative self-studies offer possibilities for connecting across programs and institutions (Loughran, 2002).

Self-study is having an impact on teaching and teacher education. Teacher educators committed to self-study have developed strong networks nationally and internationally. The S-STEP Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association is a venue in which teacher educators share their reflections on practice. The bi-annual International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices at Herstmonceux Castle in England attracts scholars from around the world. There is also an international journal, *Studying Teacher Education*, and a handbook, *International Handbook on Self-study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices*, advancing the field of self-study of teacher education.

This paper contributes to the field of self-study in teacher education by reporting on how a group of new faculty collaboratively used self-study to advance our teaching and research on teaching, ease our induction into the academy, and build a sense of community. We seek to advance the fields of self-study and higher education by offering ways in which self-study can be used to induct new professors into a university and build a community of scholars committed to improving university teaching practices.

Context and Methodology

This paper examined the practices of nine new tenure track assistant professors teaching in a pre-service teacher education program in a faculty of education at a comprehensive university in Southern Ontario. As faculty in our first (3 people), second (4) and third (1) years at Brock University, we were establishing ourselves as instructors of our courses, counsellors to teacher candidates, educational researchers, and members of the faculty and university communities. The authors, who are also participants in the study, recount the development and evolution of our self-study group during its first year, 2006-2007. We regard our work as qualitative research taking place in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998); this warrants an interpretive approach to the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Participants

As mentioned, the self-study group consists of nine professors in their first, second and third years in the faculty. In addition to their teaching assignments, listed below, each is an instructor (also termed, “counsellor”) in an elementary or secondary teaching practicum course.

Dr. Tiffany Gallagher, in her second year of a tenure-track position, teaches educational psychology. A graduate of the Ph.D. program at Brock University, Tiffany was an administrator and diagnostician in private practice supplemental education for over a decade.

Dr. Darlene Ciuffetelli-Parker, also in her second year, teaches elementary instructional methods in both the concurrent and consecutive programs. She was a board literacy consultant and a vice-principal before joining the faculty.

Dr. Julian Kitchen, in his first year, teaches education law. Prior to this appointment, the University of Toronto “seconded” him from his school for seven years to work as a teacher educator.

Dr. Lorenzo Cherubini, in his second year, teaches secondary instructional methods in both the concurrent and consecutive programs. He was a teacher and vice-principal before accepting this post.

Peter Vietgen (Ph.D. Candidate), in his third year, teaches visual arts education. A former visual arts consultant with the Toronto District School Board, Peter is completing his dissertation in the Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University.

Dr. Candace Figg, in her first year, teaches technology/computers in the classroom. Prior to accepting this tenure-track position, she was an assistant professor in educational technology at the University of Louisiana and West Texas A&M University.

Dr. Louis Volante, also in his second year, teaches assessment and evaluation courses at the pre-service and graduate level. Prior to this appointment, he held faculty appointments at Concordia University and the University of Hawaii.

Dr. Chunlei Lu, in his first year in Brock University, teaches health and physical education. Before joining the faculty, he taught in universities in China, United States, and Canada.

Shelley Griffin (Ph.D. Candidate), is in her first year of teaching elementary music education while completing her doctoral dissertation. Before her appointment at Brock, she taught at the University of Alberta and University of Prince Edward Island. Prior to university teaching, Shelley was a public school teacher in Prince Edward Island.

Context

For over 40 years, the Faculty of Education at Brock University has had a well-acknowledged history of teacher education. First established as the St. Catharines Teachers' College in 1965, the professional preparation program then became integrated with Brock University in 1971 (Moase & McAuley, 1990). It was at this time that cohort groups and teaching centres were instituted. Cohort groups were termed "counselling groups" and these student groupings were geographically centred within a designated public school facility (Moase & McAuley). Each counselling group was assigned two or more faculty members ("counsellors") to supervise teacher candidates in their field placements and provide feedback to candidates to continue to develop their practice. As well, it was at this point in time that the program of study was grounded and a course in general teaching methods was placed at the heart of the program. This teaching methods course incorporated weekly lectures, field-based assignments and discussion topics that were facilitated in the counselling groups. Application of the teaching methods was supported by the counsellors in the teaching centre experiences and practice teaching placements. In addition to teaching methods, teacher candidates took courses in curriculum studies, educational foundations, and professional ethics that focused on one of two divisions (Primary/Junior/Intermediate or Intermediate/Senior).

Since 1975 and the inception of the Master's Degree in Education, the Faculty of Education has been divided into two departments: Undergraduate and Graduate Education and Pre-Service Education. Fundamentally, the structure and course of study of the Pre-Service Education program has remained steadfast over the past three decades. Within the past five years, a significant number of founding faculty members have retired

and adjustments to work load for existing faculty have necessitated a cadre of new hires within the faculty of education. The Pre-Service program runs in parallel at two campuses. The main campus is in St. Catharines and the satellite campus is approximately 45 minutes away in Hamilton. Generally, the faculty teach their courses at both campuses, but are based as faculty counsellors at one locale. In a counselling group, faculty counsellors are partnered with at least two other part-time faculty who come to this role with experience from the field as former teachers or administrators.

Within the past two years, there has been an institution-wide focus on the advancement of research and scholarship. *Brock University's Strategic Research Plan* states objectives that seek to facilitate the development of innovative research niches while enhancing knowledge mobilization within and beyond the academy. In response to these objectives, the Pre-Service Education Department delineated goal statements focused on the Academic Impact Objectives of "Instruction," "Scholarship," and "Service." This *Academic Strategic Plan for the Pre-Service Department* aligns with the vision that the Dean of the Faculty of Education has to exemplify a "Learning Faculty." Briefly, a "Learning Faculty" is one in which faculty members are instructional leaders modeling through their practice and scholarship the qualities of exemplary educators. A collaborative examination of how nascent faculty develop in light of this vision of the "Learning Faculty" is consistent with the institutional, faculty and departmental objectives.

Data Collection

We met as a self-study group on a regular basis immediately following monthly departmental meeting. Across the academic year, there were ten, two-hour meetings. The

first few minutes of each session were devoted to “housekeeping discussions” that included dialogue that pertained to conference proposal submissions, funding proposals, and drafting academic papers. Members then rotated in the role of session facilitator and guided the discussion of teacher education practices for the session.

The facilitator (or facilitators, at times) identified a topic for self-study that emerged from their concerns as teacher educators. Session facilitators prepared a self-study paper in which they reflected on a dimension of their teacher education practices; afterwards, discussion ensued. This discussion began with the experiences of the facilitators, then extended to a consideration of our practices as a community of teacher educators. Handouts were generally provided.

The first meeting introduced members to the background of self-study. The second meeting offered an example of narrative inquiry that evolved into a self-study of teacher educators who specialize in teaching methods. The third gathering elicited a discussion about the subjectiveness and challenges of teacher candidate practica evaluation. The fourth meeting explored the role of new faculty as graduate student advisors. The fifth meeting drew together three members in a presentation of their collective case studies as new faculty discovering the impact of institutional culture. After each of the meetings, members were invited to write letters to the facilitator in response the topic of discussion. Subsequent sessions continued to allow members to reflect on their practices individually and as a collaborative self-study group.

During each session, one member acted as a scribe and recorded the discussion threads as meeting minutes. These notes were used as documentation of the conversations that took place during the self-study meetings. Many of the meetings were audio-taped

and transcribed as a form of documented data. Additionally, the three coordinators of the team (Tiffany, Darlene and Julian) wrote field notes and reflections about the interactions during the sessions. These three faculty exchanged and shared these notes through e-mail. Dyads and triads formed naturally as a function of shared interests that individuals held in their induction as new hires.

Data Analysis

Drawing on data sources common to self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), our primary data included notes by presenters, the field notes and reflections of the coordinators, reflections of other group members, and transcripts of group discussions.

This self-study took place in a natural context and several types of data were collected supporting triangulation and enhancing the credibility of the study (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data were independently coded and categorized by each of the authors. The authors came together to negotiate the categories. The common categories that emerged from these data and the categorical clusters were collapsed to form general patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). These data offer an outline of what was experienced by the self-study group members. Their experience is presented in the form of text.

Data was then shared with the entire group for further discussion. A significant amount of the analysis is “oral and constructed in the social interactions” of our community of practitioners as we made “self-conscious and often self-critical attempts to makes sense of [our] daily work by talking about it in planned ways” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004, pp. 622-623).

Sharing our Conversations: A Collaborative Self-Study

How a Group Becomes a Community of Learners

Why we came together. From the inception of the self-study group, there has been a tie that binds the collective nine faculty. We came together with varying backgrounds and expertise: literacy research, art, music, physical education, technology, assessment and evaluation research, teacher education and induction. Yet, we came together with a mutual need for our voices to be heard beyond the formal departmental and faculty meetings and as a way to get to know each other and to support each other's work. Julian stated early on after a session:

I think that this was an excellent session that bodes well for our work together as a self-study group and as new faculty working at Brock. Darlene and I were part of similar groups during our time as graduate students (JK, November 15, 2006).

Session facilitator. It was agreed that for each session there would be a facilitator presenting his/her work along with issues that all members could relate to (i.e. ongoing projects, tensions of being a new faculty member, items of discussion related to the person's field, advising and accessing graduate students, etc.). As well, members of the group advocated for listening fully to the session facilitator's presentation and to hold questions and comments for the end, so that the full extent of the material could be presented. As a form of session follow-up, it was suggested that members could write reflections to the facilitator in response to the presentation and the facilitator could also respond to the correspondence in writing. Julian, in reflections to Darlene and Tiffany, further suggested:

Let's set aside some time for business, such as conferences, etc. Let's briefly discuss how to elicit an effective, transitioning tone prior to the beginning of the meeting; one of listening to the story of the [facilitator] and then reflecting on that story (JK, November 15, 2006).

Darlene noted in the next meeting, there was:

...a sense of "formality," yet also a sense of safety seemed to transcend the room. There was an awareness of trust and at the same time excitement about sharing our thoughts on practice. I wonder whether we will make note of it as a group (DCP January 17, 2007).

Initial meetings. The initial meetings were foundational from an organizational perspective. Time was needed to "get grounded" through regular start times, agreement of when to meet and at what point in the month. It was agreed by all that the best meeting times would be after our departmental meetings as this insured we were all together on one of the two campuses. Responsibilities were given to people to book rooms or obtain technology for our use. From these initial stages it was evident that each member wanted to contribute to the function of the self-study group as a whole - there was much enthusiasm around this. Tiffany noticed:

Individuals gathered directly after the department meeting. A number of them were eating their lunch as we attempted to draw the meeting to order. Shelley was welcomed to the group by Darlene. Darlene gave her a synopsis of our organization and work to date. This was informal and other members added comments to this summary (TG, January 17, 2007).

Administrative issues. Pragmatically, administrative aspects were attended to in each meeting – these details were too important to ignore. Group members agreed that given the fact that our self-study group would meet directly after our departmental meeting, that settling into our meeting was a crucial transition. Often during this transition, there was discussion about what had transpired in the previous departmental meeting. Early on, Darlene, Julian and Tiffany suggested that at the beginning of each meeting, time be devoted for matters such as conference proposal and symposium submissions. In practice, the administrative time at the beginning of each meeting actually contributed to building a community of learners as members worked together toward a common goal of completing a “product” (i.e. conference paper). Tiffany remarked, “It is obvious that the members perceive that the acceptance of our symposium and other respective papers are imminent and we are planning with this in mind.”

Session protocol. Members that were accustomed to a narrative presentation style, such as Darlene and Julian, noticed a need to transition the meeting tone after the business-like administrative items. A tone appropriate to listening to the story of the presenter, without interruption, and then reflecting on that story was needed for each meeting to be successful. Julian suggested, “Let’s listen without interruption for the first portion of the talk, before having a chance to ask questions and offer our reflections on the presentation” (JK, January 17, 2007).

During discussions, some of the members of the self-study group possessed an active participation style and others were quietly reflective. For example, Darlene motioning to Chunlei to move from a reflective listener to vocal participant in the conversation. She did this only once, then at the subsequent meetings, Chunlei was an

active participant. Julian stated to Darlene and Tiffany, “I was glad that Darlene drew Chunlei out at the very end. It is important that everyone contribute, and that some of us monitor our contributions so others may contribute more” (JK, December 13, 2006).

Session commitment. From the initial self-study meetings to the present gatherings, the group still experiences the tension of time-constraints. Indeed, we have found a regular opportunity to meet given members’ demanding schedules – this offers further insight into the commitment of the members of this supportive group, despite the demanding timelines of other duties. There seems to be a sincere need for this community of learners to remain intact, despite the time tensions in our new faculty roles. Darlene notes:

I think everyone appreciated the natural extension and flow of conversation that linked our last session with this one. It was a nice feeling of communal effort/safety in sharing our work. I am noticing that the more we gather in our group, the safer, more collegial, friendly and exciting it is becoming...What has happened that has made the group flow so naturally in such a safe comforting environment? (DCP, January 17, 2007)

Collaboration: Resonance in our Teacher Education Practices

Commonality of experiences. Each session facilitator offered the self-study group their perspective on a uniquely personal issue. Regardless of the topic of the facilitator’s presentation, each participating member was able to resonate with the discussions at hand. Darlene’s discussion of her duty as coordinator of the teaching methods course resonated with Tiffany’s duty as coordinator of the educational psychology course.

Illumination of the tension of new faculty assuming these roles was made evident through

sharing stories regarding the responsibilities that are associated with being a course coordinator. In a letter Tiffany wrote to Darlene:

...[w]ith respect to the added responsibilities of being a Course Coordinator, you and Lorenzo looked to each other to literally form the “concept” of the Methods Coordinator position. I see your four themes like four circles in a venn diagram almost entirely overlapping. You found your “mirror image” to collaborate with and this has been such an affirming experience for you both. This is a fundamental difference between our experiences as new faculty. I haven’t found my “mirror image” to critically reflect with through dialogue. This is one reason why I am so eager to pursue this endeavor of self-study. My hope is to find several similar images in my new faculty colleagues, instead of feeling like a zebra with different coloured stripes (TG, November 18, 2006).

For the self-study group members, relating to others’ experiences has contributed to the cohesion of the group. Participation in the self-study sessions has afforded members the opportunity to reflect critically on their respective roles in the Pre-service Department and how to move forward from this new perspective.

Louis’ presentation on the assessment and evaluation of teacher candidates struck a chord with members. Like Louis, they have also experienced frustration with the assessment tool that they are required to use to evaluate teacher candidates’ practice. Despite the fact that the teacher education program espouses the practice of formative assessment, the assessment tool that faculty are required to use is not formative in nature. Louis communicated this tension given his own expert knowledge of the topic of

assessment. The focus of a companion paper in this symposium is Louis' presentation and how it resonated with everyone else's experiences evaluating teacher candidates in practicum.

In a subsequent meeting, Louis shared a book review on the evaluation of teacher candidates as a follow-up to his prior presentation. Tiffany noted in her field notes that this continuance of Louis' presentation was of great interest to the group and it demonstrated Louis' ongoing commitment to self-study this particular aspect of his practice:

I am now wondering if a similar effect is happening to other members of the self-study group? In other words, do members have a heightened awareness for topics and issues that we have discussed during the meetings? If this is the case, then the benefits of the self-study work are compounded, and these by-products are worthy of noting (TG, February, 21, 2007)

Offering insight into varying perspectives: diversity in the group

When conversations offer varying perspectives. Tiffany's presentation of advising graduate students was of interest to many new faculty. Some members questioned the working policies of the Undergraduate and Graduate Department for new faculty to advise graduate students. Other members with an informed understanding of these policies asked for clarity of the advising process. There was also discussion about the image of the graduate student advisor and members offered their perspectives on what it means "to advise." Darlene reflected:

Louis and Darlene commented on the role of editing and suggesting services for graduate students. The conversation then led to co-authorship of advisor and

students if there was so much time committed to the writing from the advisor.

Chunlei seemed to agree towards co-authorship while Candace took exception to the issue of co-authoring. Chunlei asked, “Why are we doing this then?” and continued to make a case for graduate students as young scholars, as well as the dual learning that happens, and the win-win of co-authorship (DCP, January 17, 2007).

At the end of Tiffany’s presentation, the conversation, as described in Darlene’s words above, ensued on the topic of co-authorship. Chunlei supported a co-authoring relationship between a professor and a graduate student as a great deal of time and effort is devoted to advising and revising the work of a graduate student. Other members, such as Candace, believed that co-authoring with a graduate student might be morally unjust. All members listened respectfully to this discussion that offered dichotomous perspectives. As Chunlei continued to make a case for young scholars as writing partners, others noted the tensions involved in such collaboration with graduate students such as spending a large amount of time on editing a graduate student’s writing. Both Julian and Chunlei pondered such questions as, “What are we doing it [advising] for? Is it worth it to advise?”

Despite the varying perspectives that were brought to light during this session, members left the meeting feeling empowered to partake in the conversation. This is the phenomenon of the self-study group. Darlene clarified this in her field notes, “We all left with what seemed to be an empowering feeling of having been listened to” (DCP, January 17, 2007). This power is likely to have implications on our future work in teacher education. Julian described our sessions by stating:

I was most impressed by the following: a) The commonality of experiences...We all expressed our concerns and identified the improvement of the form as a priority; b) The quality of sharing. Everyone participated...We all had stories and we all seemed stronger for the experience of sharing them (JK, December 13, 2006).

Discussion

While self-study is primarily a personal inquiry, self-study researchers benefit by working with collaborators who help them “step outside” themselves in order to notice patterns and trends in their work (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 14). It is anticipated that the experience of participating in this self-study group will afford each of the members the opportunity to examine and deconstruct his/her change in practice. As an interactive model, self-study will support the members’ personal transformations.

Our institution is committed to becoming a “Learning Faculty” (Heap, 2005) in which teacher educators and students participate in constructivist practices while engaged in learning. As a collective, we believe that studying our teacher education practices through self-study will help us understand more deeply the complexities of teacher education and develop a learning community within our faculty. There is a sense of community that has formed among the new hires in this collegial self-study group. In this fashion, we are modeling the function of a professional learning community in an institution of higher education; we are also assigning a sense of value to the pursuit of collegiality.

As a function of being self-study participants, we are each paying heightened attention to our instructional practices and in the process, we are enhancing our

scholarship. Indeed, this is instrumental as it is common for new faculty to hold a singular focus on either teaching or scholarship; the consequence is that one focus thrives while the other foci may suffer (Boice, 2000). As we study our own scholarship of teaching, we will continue to collaborate on presentations and co-authoring articles.

Educational Significance

Collaborative self-studies addressing shared concerns offer possibilities for connecting across programs and institutions (Loughran, 2002). While there is an ever-increasing literature on collaborative self-study, few involve new faculty and there are no published studies of a large group of newly hired faculty engaged in self-study groups. At this juncture, it is difficult to determine the full extent of the impact of our work on our own practices. It is clear that the members of the group have grown in unanticipated ways through their splinter self-study dyads and triads. This research will contribute to national and international literature of teacher education practices by outlining how such a group evolved and developed, and by illustrating some of the collaborative projects that have emerged from new faculty committed to collaborative self-study of teacher education practices.

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The Brock Self-study Group in Action: Examining Teacher Candidate Evaluations

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The first paper in this symposium outlined the establishment of a self-study group of nine recently hired professors in the Faculty of Education at Brock University. It also outlined the structure of our sessions and provided an overview of our collaboration over the 2006-2007 academic year.

In the current paper, we focus on a single meeting of the self-study group. This 90-minute meeting, which took place on December 13, 2006, was facilitated by Louis Volante, one of our group members. His self-study presentation and the ensuing discussion focussed on teacher educators' experiences evaluating teacher candidates during their practicum sessions in schools.

Herein, to report on this session, we draw primarily on detailed reflections written by four group members: Julian Kitchen, Tiffany Gallagher, Darlene Ciuffetelli-Parker, and Candace Figg. Reflections were written from notes taken during the session. Some notes were very detailed, while others were more impressionistic. These reports were compiled and cross-confirmed among the four group members. Typically, the reflections featured both detailed information about the session and the personal perspectives of the writers. In citing information and quotations from these reflections, we will refer only to the initials of the writer (e.g. J.K). When members of the group are introduced, their given names and surnames will be used; thereafter, members will be referred to only by given names.

When analyzing the written reflections, we considered important themes that emerged for us as a self-study group. Following is a sequential account of the beginning of the featured session, the presentation offered by Louis, and the subsequent group discussion. Then we provide a synthesis of our perspectives on the structuring of our session and the process of collaborating as new faculty. Later, we offer implications for the self-study of teacher education practices.

Beginning

“The meeting began with some confusion on place and time,” wrote Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker. “Members of the group were uncertain whether the meeting was at 1pm after an hour lunch break, or immediately following the Pre-service Department meeting” (DCP). Once all members of the group had assembled, the meeting began at 12:20.

Scheduling a regular self-study group meeting for nine faculty members has been an ongoing challenge across the academic year. Our faculty work across two campuses, and they have very different schedules for teaching and research. As a result, we decided to meet monthly after our departmental meeting. Meeting rooms are at a premium at our institution and consequently, when the department meetings are at the main campus in St. Catharines, the self-study group must reconvene in a different building. It was decided that since Tiffany Gallagher is based out of this campus, that she would take responsibility for booking a meeting room when we were to meet in St. Catharines; similarly, Darlene would book a meeting space at the Hamilton campus.

On December 13, 2006, the department meeting was scheduled to run until noon at the Hamilton campus. Despite the fact that meeting space is more accessible at this campus, by the time everyone had left the departmental meeting, picked up some lunch,

found a room, and reconvened, half an hour had elapsed. As an attempt to streamline the beginning of future meetings, Darlene proposed that future self-study meetings should begin 20 minutes after the adjournment of the departmental meeting. This suggestion was well received, and Darlene and Tiffany took it upon themselves to ensure that rooms were pre-booked and gentle reminders posted through e-mail to all self-study group members “within a day or so before meeting” (DCP).

The first twenty minutes of the meeting was taken up with “administrative and organizational issues” (TG). The status of conference proposals for the Canadian Society of Studies in Education (CSSE) was discussed. Recently, the self-study group had submitted a symposium proposal to the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) special interest group of CSSE. Darlene and Tiffany also reported on the status of our application for Scholarly Learning Community Initiation Grant from James Heap, Dean of the Faculty of Education. This internal funding source supports the creation of scholarly learning communities within our faculty.

After this period of administrative discussion, seven members were present and ready for the self-study presentation to begin. One member was absent for this particular session; the ninth member did not join the group until January 2007.

The Presentation

Julian Kitchen prefaced the beginning of the presentation with the comment that this session was, “the first one at which a self-study was being presented by someone who had not previously worked in self-study.” The facilitator for this session was Louis Volante, who has researched and published widely in the areas of program evaluation and classroom assessment practices.

In his presentation titled, “Validating Student Teacher Evaluation Frameworks,” Louis relied on his areas of expertise to examine the reliability and validity of the assessment tools he was required to use as a faculty counsellor evaluating teacher candidates during their practicum placements. In particular, he expressed reservations about the evaluation forms that faculty counsellors are expected to complete on each of the teacher candidates in their caseload. The evaluation form includes a checklist of 33 “look-fors” to assess in a one-time classroom visitation. In general, Louis questioned the reliability and validity of such assessments that are based on limited observation time. He posited that this assessment tool that faculty members use to score the teaching ability of our teacher candidates is summative, rather than formative. Furthermore, the tool requires faculty counsellors to evaluate many items that are difficult to reasonably address in 40 to 70 minutes of classroom observation.

Drawing on Black and Wiliams’s *Inside the Black Box* (1998), a seminal article on formative assessment that articulates the importance of “assessment for learning,” Louis questioned the utility of the current evaluation framework for teacher candidates. Reflecting on his own experiences as a faculty counsellor last year, Louis articulated his feelings of discomfort completing the rating scale on the evaluation form. Based on his understanding of the field, Louis regarded open-ended and anecdotal formats as more authentic and adaptive than rating scales for discrete items. Furthermore, he felt that the use of the same tool for both faculty counsellor and associate teacher was not appropriate.

This year, Louis and Darlene engaged in a collaborative self-study of their practice using the assessment tool to evaluate their teacher candidates. Louis shared his reflections with Darlene, who had also reflected on the use of the assessment tool during

practicum visits. After each teacher candidate's observation, there was a feedback session. For data collection purposes, Louis and Darlene kept logs to document the feedback that they had offered their candidates. This log was not shared with the teacher candidates; it was used for the collaborative self-study. From his reflections, Louis noticed that his feedback comments typically addressed observable criteria, such as "classroom management," "teacher-student interactions" and "discourse." In fact, all of his feedback sessions included a substantial proportion of comments related to "classroom management;" these aspects of teacher candidate performance were observable readily in a 40-minute period. All of the other items on the evaluation form that he observed, such as "sustaining class involvement," were also overt performance indicators. Louis regarded a number of the other criteria such as assessment of "professional knowledge" and "commitment to student learning" as items that are ambiguously assessed. He avoided discussing these items unless the teacher candidate requested Louis's comment on these criteria.

The tensions Louis felt as a faculty counsellor extended beyond his concerns about the details of the assessment instrument. He also felt a tension regarding how to offer teacher candidates feedback that they would find helpful to enhance their practice. Louis questioned, "Should I provide feedback as a counsellor (strictly recording observations using the assessment tool) or as an educator (making comments that would help the teacher candidate improve, but might be construed by those reading the evaluation as indicating substandard teaching performance)?" Louis presented his conjecture to the self-study group in the form of a global consideration, "Is it not counter-

intuitive for faculty counsellors to offer formative feedback while completing a summative evaluation form?”

A third issue that concerned Louis with the teacher candidate evaluation process stemmed from the criteria items in the assessment tool itself. During one 40-minute observation period a few of items in the tool can not always be observed and thus require consultation with the associate teacher in order to get information for the faculty counsellor to assess. This ‘assessment by proxy’ seems to be a less than stringent process and this leaves Louis feeling uneasy. However, the only other alternative is for a faculty counsellor to leave the criteria item unchecked simply indicating that the item was “not observed.” There are potential ramifications to leaving an item blank on the evaluation form, as readers (such as prospective employers) might infer that the teacher candidate was not able to demonstrate these criteria.

In concluding, Louis summarized the tensions that he felt as a faculty counsellor whose area of scholarship is assessment and evaluation. He suggested that alternative, more authentic approaches consistent with a formative focus on assessment would provide the most meaningful ways to improve teacher candidates’ practice.

The Discussion

Once Louis’s presentation was complete, the self-study members engaged eagerly in discussion. “This topic resonated with everyone in the group, as we all shared in the experience of assessing/evaluating teacher candidates using this very form,” recalled Julian.

It was not only the evaluation form that elicited discussion, there was also conversation about evaluation practices and the evaluation period. At our institution,

teacher candidates form cohort groups that are supported by three instructors that constitute a counselling team. Each counselling team consists of one faculty member and two part-time instructors. During our meeting there was also discussion of the practices of our fellow instructors in our counselling group teams. There was great variability in these practices. For some new teacher education faculty, some existing practices reflect different philosophical orientations.

Commenting on the brevity of the teacher candidate's evaluation period, Louis drew the analogy to a doctor determining blood pressure. When a doctor takes a patient's blood pressure it can vary 20 to 30 points higher or lower than previous or future readings. No doctor prescribes medicine to control a patient's blood pressure after one observation. Similarly, for faculty counsellors to prescribe an action plan based on one 40-minute evaluation would be similar to a doctor prescribing medicine after one patient examination.

Darlene, like Louis, seemed frustrated with the assessment and evaluation process during practicum visits. Consequently, Darlene and Louis have been engaged in a collaborative self-study of teacher candidates' evaluations that is tangential to the whole self-study group meetings. She informed the group that she and Louis began holding conversations regarding these issues in the Fall of 2006 and soon after began emailing each other reflections made during practicum evaluations. She felt that her feedback sessions with teacher candidates were always subjective. Darlene, too, felt she had to discuss items with associate teachers in order to provide a complete summative evaluation based on the tool. She held similar tensions as to whether to evaluate the lesson for the benefit of the teacher candidate, with comments that could be used for

improving the lesson (formative evaluation), or whether to use the tool for summative evaluation purposes. Darlene explained that she had also been taking notes after practicum evaluation sessions and teacher candidates were echoing concerns about the evaluation process. Louis and Darlene have presented their preliminary work at meetings of the Ontario Teacher's Federation/Ontario Association of Dean's of Education (OTF/OADE) in January 2007, and to the Ontario Ministry of Education/Faculties of Education Forum in May 2007. Later, they presented a paper on their collaborative self-study at Canadian Society for Studies in Education conference (Volante & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2007).

During the session, Louis and Darlene continued to elaborate on their views and their conversation was interspersed with comments made by other members of the group. Peter Vietgen also expressed his discomfort using the present type of evaluation form. Based on this important conversation, he suggested that a departmental committee should be struck to adapt the teacher candidate evaluation form. Later, Peter indicated that he generally assesses teacher candidates through an anecdotal approach so as to reconcile his tension with the evaluation process and to focus on the positive aspects of their performance. Tiffany's process involves taking detailed anecdotal notes during the observation period. She shares these notes as well as a preliminary grading of where the student ranks in accordance with the criteria items on the assessment tool. During consultation, Tiffany informs her teacher candidates that she needs time to digest what she observed and she will review her anecdotal notes and then confirm that her preliminary grading is accurate before a final evaluation form is completed. Candace Figg, a new faculty member with considerable teacher education experience in the United

States, reported that she had always used anecdotal forms of assessment to identify areas for teacher candidates' performance strengths, weaknesses and next steps.

Julian, in his first year at Brock after seven years as an adjunct professor at another university, had considerable experience with practice teaching including a year as practicum coordinator at the secondary level. Julian compared the assessment practices across a number of universities: anecdotal versus checklists, faculty as supervisors versus mentors. All, he suggested, had their advantages and disadvantages. There were no easy answers! In his reflection, Julian indicated that he was impressed by the “commonality of experiences. We all shared Louis’s frustration with the form. We all expressed our concerns and identified that improvement of the form as a priority.” In the ensuing exchange with Louis, emerged a shared agreement that the assessment tool should be formative and anecdotal, if the mandate for the faculty counsellor is to help teacher candidates develop professionally. Tiffany wrote, “All members are intently listening to this conversation. This discussion had the potential to alter the very purpose of our role as faculty counsellors and require a complete examination of the whole organization of the Department.”

Towards the end of the meeting, Darlene asked Chunlei Lu for his thoughts on the teacher candidates' evaluation process. Chunlei recounted that the evaluation formats he had used in his graduate studies in China, New York and Alberta were very different. In China, professors have one cohort of teacher candidates with only one subject matter to report on, while professors in Alberta are called “facilitators” and generally evaluate about seven students each. In New York, professors do not even evaluate; retired professors evaluate teacher candidates in the field. At Brock, he noticed the evaluation of

teacher candidates was shared by full-time faculty members and part-time instructors. He also noted that part-time instructors (usually retired educators) often lead the counselling groups.

Chunlei's final comments were significant in two respects. Tiffany, for example, valued his insightfulness, "based on his varied institutional experiences." In addition, until that point Chunlei had "listened thoughtfully without adding to the discussion" (TG). Julian wrote, "I was glad that Darlene drew Chunlei out at the very end. It is important that everyone contribute, and that some of us monitor our contributions so others may contribute more." Darlene also felt that it was crucial that the participation of everyone be monitored and facilitated to ensure that everyone believes that their voice has been heard and that they have been actively involved in our "community within a community" (DCP).

Another way in which group members strive to support and extend each other's work is by writing letters of thanks to the presenters. On December 20, a week after Louis's presentation, Tiffany wrote:

Dear Louis,

I found it interesting how you pointed out the lack of application of such a basic concept in assessment and evaluation within our current practices in teacher candidate evaluation: formative assessment. Why are we not practicing what we preach? It begs the question of whether formative assessment or assessment for learning practices are going on in our pre-service courses or not; wouldn't that be an interesting study? Interestingly, it didn't always used to be this way.

A few days after your facilitation I was cleaning out our basement storage area and came across my teaching evaluations. I had to laugh at them. Most noteworthy was the format of the evaluation for Block 1 (this was when there were 3 Block placements). This evaluation was a checklist of 24 criteria that could be checked if the counsellor deemed it necessary to discuss an issue with the teacher candidate. Anecdotal comments were made on the bottom of the carbonated form. Evaluations for Blocks II and III were summative, similar to the format that we have now.

Clearly now there is a position that all evaluations are to be “counted in calculating the summary grade for 8L09.” Yet, regardless of the fact that the Pre-Service Candidate Handbook states that some criteria are “[more] important in determining the level of success in practice teaching (p.23),” all criteria are (seemingly) weighted equally in the calculation. Are these 5 “most important” criteria truly the essential skills for teacher candidates to demonstrate? There is another study. Why aren’t those 5 “most important criteria” the ones that counsellors provide anecdotal evaluations of during Block I? Wow, is there ever a lot of work to be done here, eh? I think that you have just gotten the ball rolling.

Thanks for a thought provoking facilitation,

Tiffany

At the end of each self-study group meeting, members are invited to step forward and volunteer to facilitate the next gathering. Tiffany, who offered to present at the next meeting, left looking “forward to vetting my concerns and ideas through an enthusiastic and constructively critical group.”

Conclusion

The self-study group of new faculty came together in order to create a sense of community within a large faculty of education. It was a safe place where our voices could be heard and our work as teacher educators supported.

The session protocol, which began with administrative items followed by a presentation by a group member, worked well. Efforts were made to shift into a tone appropriate for listening to the story of the presenter with few interruptions. The individual or shared presentations enabled each person to become a contributing member and an active researcher of teacher education practices.

While the session format worked well, time was always an issue. Gathering after the department meeting enabled faculty from both campuses to attend, but it also led to confusion about start times and a feeling of being rushed. Administrative issues also consumed more time than we intended. In particular, since we had submitted proposals to conferences, a certain amount of time was needed to discuss these submissions. A longer scheduled meeting time would permit more discussion and reflection. On the other hand, since all faculty members have identified time as a perennial issue as they juggle teaching, scholarship and service, convenience makes it likely that we will continue with the present meeting time.

This self-study group meeting was regarded as stimulating and affirming by all members in attendance. "There is a sense of purpose early on in this stage of our collaboration and a feeling of collegiality amongst the group, albeit everyone coming from various perspectives/places in their careers" (DCP). An unanticipated outcome of the meeting that Louis facilitated was the sense of further establishing our community of

new faculty. This community became secured by the group members' commitment to self-study through the sharing of a common concern with respect to teacher candidates' evaluations. Julian wrote, "I believe the trail of discussion that resulted in Louis' presentation has generated, and possibly created a more authentic space for the self-study group to share tensions/challenges/rewards/successes in teacher education practices through this self-study group."

Group members departed with a feeling of optimism in the process of collaborating through self-study along with the goal of continually enhancing our practice and teacher education program. Darlene reflected that, "... this area of curriculum, assessment, has had a large impact on our discussion in self-study of our practice which moves us toward a newer, fresher perspective of the department." It is likely that follow up meetings may be needed to determine whether a plan is warranted to examine the evaluation of our teacher candidates. For now, the commonalities of experiences combined with variations in perspectives resulted in meaningful professional development.

Educational Significance

New faculty are often caught between the demands of teaching, scholarship and service while striving for promotion and tenure. Self-study of teacher education practices may enable new faculty to combine teacher education with scholarship.

There is much collaboration among teacher educators committed to self-study. Most consists of collaboration among two or three faculty in an institution or a small

group of teacher educators across institutions. Our self-study group of nine new professors in a faculty of education is significant for its size and diversity.

Based on our review of the literature and discussions with members of the Self-Study Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, our group of nine professors from one faculty is unusually large, perhaps unprecedented. While it is too early to assess the success of the group, our pioneering efforts may be of interest to teacher educators interested in expanding self-study within their institutions. Questions that have emerged from our study to date include: Can a large self-study group be effective? Will it improve teacher education practices? Will it lead to increased scholarship on teaching?

Equally significant is the diversity of the group. Prior to the group's formation, only Julian (Kitchen, 2005a; 2005b) had been active in self-study for more than a year. Darlene had previously presented her self-study work at the Herstmonceux Castle in the summer of 2006 (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2006). As well, both Darlene and Lorenzo had engaged in a collaborative self-study the previous year (Cherbini & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2006). Members also came from a wide variety of subject disciplines and research traditions, including quantitative methods. Everyone, however, found common ground in the study of their own practices. Louis's reflections on teacher candidate evaluation practices were informed by his scholarship in educational assessment and evaluation. His auditors found his presentation engaging because it addressed issues of common concern to teacher educators. The diversity of the group also raises questions: Can group members sustain a common interest in self-study? How will they negotiate the tensions between their academic traditions and interests?

Collaborative self-study of teacher educators can help professors to improve their practice and contribute to their scholarship. Our success during this first year suggests that large, diverse self-study groups can succeed. More research is needed to determine how effective large self-study groups can be, and how they can contribute to the study of teacher education practices.

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Navigating The Way: Balancing The Challenges Of New Faculty

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Introduction

Every fall, like clockwork, the recurring ritual of inducting new faculty into established academic programs takes place. The cycle of novice-to-expert begins again. Although varying from individual to individual and context to context, the anxious anticipation of a new journey in our professional lives, the uncertainty of our success in our new endeavor, and the overwhelming *newness* of becoming a part of a collegial community is an experience shared by all new faculty—an experience never forgotten. The first year is naturally a *learning experiment* regardless of the length of years served in academia, and the memories collected during our initiation are often later imparted to others in the form of advice, warning, and, at times, pure entertainment. The first year experience is truly an event to be celebrated and cherished, but also, to be survived.

Background

A unique challenge awaited new hires at Brock University. In the past five years, the university had undergone robust growth burgeoning from a campus of some 5,000 students to the present enrollment of approximately 17,000. Growing pains, such as lack of infrastructure to support students, change in university policies to accommodate a large student population, and addition of many new faculty members, were tension points felt throughout the university bureaucracy. Add university issues to a growing faculty emphasis on creating an identity as a learning faculty plus a departmental program review

promising even more change to the situational context. The new hires in the Faculty of Education quickly became aware that they would be called upon to jump immediately into the necessary work rather than stepping in “one toe at a time” as recommended by our new faculty mentors. All members of the faculty were experiencing change—regardless of seniority.

We new hires were not hesitant. After all, we expected to carve out our own niche in the Pre-service Department so that our contributions could be valued while developing meaningful, satisfying, and successful careers. Achieving an objective such as this has never been simple. How would we, as new faculty, develop this *professional value* within the evolving framework of a learning faculty?

Fortunately, there were a number of new tenure-track faculty members in the Faculty of Education who, by banding together, provided a voice to the concerns and issues. Through the use of self-study (Hamilton, LaBoskey, Loughran, & Russell, 1998; Loughran & Russell, 1997; Samaras, 2002) and a mutual sharing of personal experiences and challenges among eight of these newly-hired tenure-track faculty, four of us decided to hold additional meetings in order to explore the art of developing *professional value* within this evolving framework.

In this group, Peter, Candace, Shelley, and Chunlei were interested in discussing the topic of professional value and how that might be impacted by their various discipline specializations. The senior member of the group was Peter, our specialist in Art Education methods. Peter had been teaching at Brock for three years and was additionally completing his doctoral dissertation. Chunlei and Candace were officially new hires as they accepted positions and arrived at the university the previous summer. Chunlei, one

of our Health and Physical Education methods specialists, brought to the university a large research grant and several years of experience as an assistant professor at a research-intensive university. Candace, our Technology Integration specialist, was making the transition from her native Texas after several years of teaching at the university level in the southern United States. Shelley, also a new hire as one of our Music specialists, joined the group at mid-year after spending the fall crafting her dissertation to the polish and defend stage.

Methods

This study is situated within the self-study framework with the purpose of “developing a better understanding of particular pedagogical situations” (Hamilton et al., 1998). As each pedagogical situation is unique, full generalizability to other situations is not possible, nor expected; however, providing rich context descriptions by each participant researcher facilitates transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Kirkwood-Tucker and Bleicher (2003) suggest following guidelines from Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) in which quality self-study research also exposes “enough of one’s experiences and beliefs to reveal the relationships, contradictions, and limits of the views presented to enable readers to make connections to their own practice” (p. 205).

Samaras and Freese (2006) define self-study as “teachers’ systematic and critical examination of their actions and their context as a path to develop a more consciously driven mode of professional activity” (p. 11) for three purposes, “first, personal growth and development; second, professional growth and development, and third, classroom and school improvement” (p. 15). To ensure rigor of the process, we incorporated four

criteria outlined by LaBoskey (2004, as cited in Samaras and Freese, 2006, p. 59) as essential for the correct practice of self-study:

- ? Self study is self-initiated and focused on self. Its goal is self-improvement, and it “requires evidence of reframed thinking and transformed practice” (p. 859).
- ? Self-study is interactive and involves collaboration and interaction with colleagues, students, and the literature “to confirm or challenge our developing understandings” (p. 859).
- ? “Self-study employs multiple, primarily qualitative methods” . . . which “provide us with opportunities to gain different and thus more comprehensive perspectives on the educational processes under investigation” (p. 859).
- ? Self-study requires that we “formalize our work and make it available to our professional community for deliberation, further testing, and judgment.” “Self-study achieves validation through the construction, testing, sharing, and re-testing of exemplars of teaching practice” (p. 860).

Data Collection

For new faculty, the opportunity to meet once a month and discuss pressing personal struggles or issues with teaching, scholarship, and service was to serve as a means of working together to negotiate the “three core concerns of early-career faculty: lack of a comprehensible tenure system, lack of community, and a lack of integration of their academic and personal lives” (Cox, 2004, p. 17). Over the initial nine months of our first term, we kept individual reflective journals, documentation regarding our emails to each other containing insights/concerns, article suggestions, and other resources of interest, as

well as collected notes regarding our individual and serendipitous comments during other meetings and informal sessions. However, the heart of the data collected for this research came from the in-depth and lively discussions in our monthly meetings regarding professional value. Topics ranged from developing a definition of *professional value* of a faculty member according to the community culture at this university to adapting teaching strategies specifically for this population of students. We brought to the table any issue that was currently impacting our professional value. Using these multiple data sources allowed triangulation by comparing across a variety of data to make connections and observe patterns.

Data Analysis

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) state that “in the collection and analysis of data, it is sometimes hard to distinguish between when the collecting ends and when the analysis begins, for gathering and analysis are complementary, ongoing, and often simultaneous processes” (p. 85). The researchers, or participant researchers as in this research, serve as human instruments through which data generation and analysis occur; therefore, the process of data analysis began with the first meeting of the participant researchers. Over the months of meetings, we informally noted the themes and patterns we saw emerging from our discussions together. For the purposes of this study, each participant reviewed the transcripts of our meetings, their own personal reflection documents, and documented email correspondence to construct their own personal narrative case study report. Case study reports allow the researchers to present the reader with a thick description of the context surrounding the investigation so that “a setting with its complex interrelationships and multiple realities to the intended audience in a

way that enables and requires that audiences interact cognitively and emotionally with the setting” (Erlandson et al., 1993) is communicated clearly. The reports, as well as the transcripts from meetings, email, and other collected artifacts, were analyzed using a constant comparative analysis process, in which data was unitized and sorted into emergent categories by assigning codes to each of the unitized data. Themes emerged from analysis of the categories. These themes and the coding process were cross-checked with all participant researchers to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Emerging Themes: Transformation as Evidence of Impact

Answering the question “What is professional value in this learning faculty?” is a task all new faculty members informally undertake. The difference for the four new members at Brock University who were participating in this small group of four was the ability to meet together in a self-study group established specifically for the purpose of formally investigating this topic. We began by constructing a definition of professional value at our new institution. We established the fact that professional value would need to be viewed from three perspectives: issues related to personal views of professionalism, issues related to departmental requirements for professionalism, and issues related to university-wide requirements for professionalism. Each of these three perspectives or levels needed to be addressed. With a clear understanding of the types of issues we would discuss, and to make sure there was rigor to our method, we documented how these discussions framed and reframed our thinking, or *transformed* our thinking (Samaras & Freese, 2006) about our role as professors in an institute of higher learning. As we

documented our transformation, we saw themes emerging that serve as evidence that the reflective process has impacted our skills and understandings.

Professional Value

We defined professional value as “creating an identity in a new position.” We recognized that this identity could vary from institution to institution, and we often found ourselves comparing procedures and policies here at Brock to those experiences with other universities. We have reframed our thinking from our previous experiences to align more closely to the expectations of the Brock University community. For Brock, we identified three components that would provide a sense of identity while satisfying the three perspectives or levels of professional value.

First, we all expressed the idea of a personal performance standard or set of benchmarks for performance. Peter described it as a form of *integrity* when he stated,

I have to wake up every morning and feel good about what I do—what I share and what I give to my students, to my colleagues, even my contribution to you as part of this self study group. And, I want to do what I think is right. . . . personal integrity is very important for me.

Candace described the need to “be satisfied that I perform to that standard of professor that I have concocted for myself personally” and Chunlei added that his idea of professor included one who was “both educating teachers (teaching) and advancing knowledge or understanding of expertise areas (research).”

“Putting the situation into perspective” was the process Shelley described, so that, as Peter added, “we see ourselves fitting into the world we live in—among our families, among our colleagues.”

A component of *satisfaction* was also evident in our discussions. Being able to do our jobs well provided a sense of satisfaction, so the time to perform with integrity in the areas of teaching, research, and service must be available. In our discussions, Peter asked,

How can we have integrity if we do not have a chance to reflect on what we are doing and how we are doing it? If we do not, we go through life with blinders on, only racing ahead, oblivious to the signs from those around us we love, who keep telling us that life is short.

Chunlei added, “You only have 24 hours a day. You are hired working 8 hours for five days in a week. You have no time to do research and writing for publication.” Each of the group members felt that time and satisfaction were closely intertwined. Candace called time “the enemy” and Shelley and Peter felt the pressure of carving out time specifically for writing time to finish their dissertations.

Setting performance standards that demonstrated integrity and finding satisfaction by having the time to perform to these standards were large pieces of *professional value*, but a final component of *currency* was evident. We all had chosen careers in higher education because of a driving need to stay on the cutting edge of the teaching profession. Candace referred to currency as possessing “21st century skills” that would “be a part of developing and improving our program.” We agreed that we were teachers, first and foremost, so the research issues and topics that appeal to us impact our own teaching and knowledge about best practices for teaching. Shelley observed that we sought to provide

pre-service teachers with “meaningful . . . experiences that will lead them to feel competent and energized to then lead primary/junior children towards enhanced . . . understanding.” Only by working in higher education would we have the opportunity to stay on that cutting edge and work with the novice members of our professional community. Chunlei added that he would not “work in an institution only requiring teaching or only requiring research. It had to be both . . . I see my status (e.g., social) reflecting my potential and expertise among our generation.”

Survival as the New Member in a Learning Faculty

Survival issues were uppermost in our initial meetings. Although we all discussed the overwhelming challenges facing new faculty moving to a new institution, Shelley wrote:

Aside from the job role, there are so many things to get in order when one is moving to a new place. Trying to figure out where I wanted to live in an unknown city was somewhat of a challenge. I also felt overwhelmed when I thought about the research that I needed to do to find a doctor, dentist, chiropractor, massage therapist, and optometrist. I needed to apply for Ontario Health (OHIP), change my driver’s license, get new license plates – not to mention all the things I needed to do in Edmonton to get packed, arrange moving, and say my temporary good-byes. Again, the tasks were overwhelming. For me, when these personal concerns are not in order, it is difficult to be productive in a professional context. How is my professional value defined when I have so many tasks to focus upon? Where does my professional value fit? I had to consciously remind myself to breathe. It

would fall in to place. I had to remind myself of the potential greatness of the opportunity that came my way.

With many of the personal issues resolved, next we were faced with other common challenges associated with being the new faculty member entering an established program. Chunlei listed the “immediate working factors (e.g., new courses, counseling group teaching, email system, administration, library)” that we commonly shared and then explained that working around the "strict rules regarding experience with supervising master's level students before supervising graduate students" would be challenging for the continuance and success of the large research project he was implementing. Candace also had specific issues with being responsible for developing course materials and requirements so that consistency across the team of five technology teachers would be maintained, regardless of who was teaching. Shelley explained the process as one of wanting “to align my goals with those of other instructors so that consistency was maintained across various sections of the course [being] mindful of the routine that was previously established by other faculty members and instructors.”

We all shared the idea that there was too much content to fit into the short instructional time allotted; and yet, that was how the program had been successfully working for years. Together, we discussed different techniques and teaching strategies that allowed us to “renegotiate how to distribute the content in less time,” as Shelley noted. Peter summed it up for all group members when he stated, “I felt like I just got the ball rolling and they leave me!” Having Peter in the group with three years experience with the program was invaluable. He had already worked through reframing his thinking

about content and prioritizing content to meet the time frame, and although he still felt that the time was too short, he could share his strategies and success stories with us.

Understanding the policies and procedures for performing successfully in this faculty was important for survival of our first year experiences. In fact, a unique factor influencing the dynamics of this Faculty of Education was the growth in size of the faculty. Peter tells the story this way:

Four new faculty were hired in the pre-service department to start that year. Four new voices, four new perspectives on teacher education! We were up to eight new people in two years in the pre-service department, and it was starting to show. At pre-service meetings, questions were being asked from every angle. Why is the format like this? Who designed that model? When was that developed?

The presence of thirteen new faculty members over a period of three years brought “a strong influx of cutting-edge ideas and unexplored possibilities waiting to be tapped” into the mix, as Candace explained. “The tension between the push to improve and change brought in by new faculty and the homage paid to traditional, historical methods” changed relationships with others and how we sought professional value. Another challenge that would need to be survived! Peter commented that the “majority of my colleagues had been there for many years. They were proud of what they had worked hard at to establish – a reputable pre-service program with very high standards.”

Together, we identified practical ways to combine our voices in order to be heard, which meant that we worked to reframe our questions and suggestions so that we presented ideas in a more respectful manner, always mindful of the work and improvements that had preceded ours, identified senior faculty to approach for support, and began planning

collaborative projects/student assignments that could be duplicated by others wishing to do so. Understanding how to successfully work in this new context became easier simply because we used each other as a sounding board to work out ideas for best ways to work within the existing structure.

Living a Balanced Life

A final theme that emerged from our stories, reflections, and discussions was the need to live a balanced life while maintaining professional value. Together we discussed techniques for controlling the juggling act between our personal and professional lives. From things as simple as how to manage email effectively so that it does not take over one's life to the more complex issues of advising graduate students or appropriate committee participation for tenure and promotion, we voiced our concerns related to exactly how balance could be obtained! Explaining the need for *balance* while living in the world of academia is difficult to those not directly involved in academia. Peter states:

When I look back, my job is consuming me. I try to make a conscious effort to find some sense of balance, but I always hear my family and friends say, "Peter, you better slow down!" I tell them I am trying but they just don't understand my reality. No one in my family is or has ever been in academia, let alone teaching. I find it frustrating at times trying to have them understand the pressures I am under as a new, tenure-track professor, juggling many different coloured balls all at once. It is difficult for them to see what I see.

Therefore, achieving that balance was critical in order to live satisfying and productive personal and professional lives!

Very early in our discussions, we started listing the tensions in our professional lives that could easily fall out of balance. Chunlei compiled a list of challenges that we deal with on a daily basis in the professional world of Brock University, including the following balances:

- ? One's personal life and professional life
- ? Expectations of teaching, research, and service
- ? Changing focus of the new and old mission of Brock (change in university from a focus on undergraduate teaching to that of a comprehensive research focus)
- ? Tensions between new faculty (hired with a focus on research) and veteran faculty (hired into a system with a teaching focus)
- ? Tensions between the Primary/Junior/Intermediate program groups and the Intermediate/Senior program groups
- ? Tension between the two departments in the Faculty of Education (e.g., graduate program, research culture of the grad/undergrad program and the counselling/teaching as scholarship focus of pre-service department)

How would we deal with balancing all of these needs? Peter expressed it for all of us when he remarked, "I need time to look back and think about what has happened. I think in our busy lives, we don't do that enough. Balance is what is needed." We agreed that the self-study group allowed the opportunity to explore ways to achieve this balance.

Candace explained:

I truly was able to create a sense of balance between living my personal life and being that professor of high quality. Have I completed all of my goals? No, not

yet, but I know where to go to get the information I need. With the help of the self-study group, I have identified appropriate methods for successfully working in this faculty. Plus, I have an idea of how I can set up support for new faculty who follow me and work to build a learning faculty!

Even Shelley who has only been in academia half-time this year feels confident that her participation in the self-study group has given her “an opening to share my voice and acknowledge my professional value.”

Conclusions: Navigating the Path from Survival to New Horizons

According to Fuller’s seminal work (1969), novice teachers share a common set of concerns that can be expressed in a series of developmental stages. For example, during the first phase of development, concerns are related to self—the self’s ability to perform as a teacher. Much energy and attention is expended at this stage on developing identity as a teacher, pleasing supervisors, and acquiring necessary information to survive in the community context. With experience, teacher concerns move from self to those related to teaching tasks, such as implementing appropriate curriculum, providing adequate student feedback and assessment, or participating in committee work. Finally, after additional experiences, novice teachers move into a phase of concern that addresses the business of education—focusing on students and their learning needs as outcomes of teaching tasks (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975). The participants in this study were already skilled teachers with many years of public and university teaching in their backgrounds, therefore, the development of teaching skills was not a focus; yet, we experienced similar Stages of Concern (Hall, 1976; Hall, Wallace, & Dossett, 1973). An initial stage was felt by these participants related to issues of *self* or *identity*. Survival needs were our first

priority as we struggled with handling the issues related to working in higher education, such as understanding parameters of university expectations and adjusting to requirements of a new faculty position. These concerns were juggled on top of the adjustments for moving into a new province, area, and country. Merely dealing with the paperwork from becoming a new citizen and a new faculty member was overwhelming.

We moved into a second stage of concerns related to the tasks we needed to perform to become a great teacher, scholar, and collaborative partner as required by our department, faculty, and university. Concerns led to our examination of issues related to the delivery of content in the short time frame of the program as well as how to accomplish curriculum or program improvement. The feedback and support received in the self-study group became invaluable during this time. Trowler and Knight (2000) assert that “induction [programs provided by the universities] of NAAs [new academic appointees] is far less significant than what happens in activity systems and in the cultures created in communities of practice” (p. 28). We found this to be true in our situation. Even though we were all relatively new faculty, Peter had been a part of the system for three years and could give information and advice as needed. In addition, the larger self-study group contributed to our learning needs as we had an informal group of mentors who were available and helpful. Then, as new issues arose, the members of the self-study group could advise and direct us. We quickly found ourselves deliberating the issues related to a third stage of concerns—feeling the confidence and skills to focus on the delicate balancing act that faculty members perform as they move between the roles and tasks related to the niche or identity that we establish for ourselves in the academic community. McGill and Beaty (2001) describe efforts in a faculty learning community as

“a continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with an intention of getting things done” (p. 11). Within the safe and confidential forum of this learning community, the participants in this study were able to “get things done,” or build the understandings of personal and professional identity necessary to move quickly from the initial stages of addressing survival needs to the real work of academia (teaching, scholarship, and service).

Navigating the path from survival to new horizons can be a lengthy, frustrating, arduous, yet rewarding endeavour. As Chunlei states, working with others:

seems to create a space to express ourselves as new faculty, discuss issues that concern us, help each other to understand the new environment, console each other, release each other’s stress, share information, identify certain common problems, enjoy being around with each other... We seem to feel safe, empathy, supported. Despite time consuming, this self-study group becomes a truly collective community. It significantly helps us survive in the difficult initial years, and provides strength ready for the years to come.

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