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- Dr. Stephen Covey

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Supervision Practices Promoting Continuous, Self-directed Professional Growth and Quality Performance among Educational Personnel in the School Context

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Educational Administration and Leadership

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2005

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. May you be inspired to reach for your dreams, to always enjoy fulfillment through continuous learning and pursuit of excellence in all that you do, and may your example lead the young people of our future generations.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate supervision practices promoting continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among school-based educational personnel. Data were collected through interviews and review of relevant policy documents. The findings of this study reveal less than positive views toward supervision and its influence on continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Neither principals nor teachers find conventional supervision practices meaningful, adequate, appropriate, or effective in today's educational context. Factors that support and impede effective supervision practice are identified. 20 recommendations for practice, specific to perceptions of supervision, organizational culture, and teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, are included in concluding comments, along with 8 questions for further study.

Acknowledgements

A dream was realized in completing my Graduate study and this thesis. My family, through their encouragement, understanding, and boundless support of my work, fuelled my determination and belief that I could achieve my goals. Thank you to my husband, Ken, my children, Jennifer, Keith, Kyle, and Jay, and my grandchildren, Jacob, Ethan, and Mitchell, along with my extended family and in-laws, who helped to light the path for my journey. To my parents, William and Diana Cherniwchan, thank you for always standing beside me, and for helping to instil in me a passion for learning and a commitment to striving for excellence in all that I do. To all of you, thank you for the benefits of your love and for believing in me.

I am deeply indebted to my advisor, Dr. José L. da Costa for his patient encouragement and support of my work, for his expertise and guidance through reflective dialogue, and for his shared belief in the importance of this study. He truly is an inspiration.

I am grateful to Dr. Frank Peters for the interest, support, and encouragement in this study and in my experiences in practice. His words of wisdom and sense of humour encourage me to analyze my reality through different lenses, and give me the courage to reflect critically on all that I learn and do as a professional.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the three principals and the three teachers whose participation made this study possible. I am honoured to be trusted with the lived experiences and intensely personal stories of these educational professionals.

I am thankful for the many supportive colleagues, peers, friends, and Graduate study cohorts who encouraged me throughout my Graduate work experiences, and who were always eager to engage in professional dialogue and to share their expertise. Special thanks to those who provided needed assistance and feedback as peer reviewers, and to William Cherniwchan and Fern Reirson for their keen eyes during the final editing process.

Of course, I wish to express my appreciation to Edmonton Public Schools for allowing me a challenging range of professional experiences and continuing professional growth for more than 25 years. Thank you for your support and for your trust in my leadership.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Professional dialogue among school-based educational personnel indicates increasing dissatisfaction and concern related to current supervision practices. Traditional supervision practices are no longer meaningful, adequate, or effective in today's school context. These practices, still widely used for lack of knowledge, alternatives, or direction do not reflect current organizational thought, nor do they sufficiently support relatively recent changes in provincial and school district policies related to supervision of educational personnel. Concerns related to supervision are not a recent development brought on by cries of crisis in pubic education, increased accountability, or public perception of the quality of teachers and school-based administrators. A search for a clear definition of supervision, a defined purpose, and improved practices over more than 25 years has not provided the answers practitioners seek, despite consensus that supervision of educational personnel is necessary and desirable in improving educational outcomes for students.

Roles and responsibilities of educational personnel are continually being redefined as educational organizations look to the future. Leadership training programs help to prepare teachers for administrative roles, but time designated to supervision issues in program curricula does not mirror the importance of supervision in the school context or in responsibilities related to the school administrator's role as an instructional and educational leader. Credibility of the

principal, the school-based administrator ultimately responsible for supervision in today's context, is often a concern, with many principals having no more training, expertise, or experience than the teachers they supervise. School-based principals accept their charge of supervisory responsibility, yet most would admit to a degree of concern regarding their level of comfort, knowledge, competency, and willingness in their supervisory role. Compounding this are often conflicting demands on principals' time. Effective supervision is time consuming, but despite best intentions, supervisory actions are frequently interrupted or displaced by emergent school needs, or by a steadily increasing array of administrative and management responsibilities required at the school level. Conflicting beliefs, expectations, and needs of individual educational personnel increase dissatisfaction with the supervision process and add to the challenges in developing an effective, growth-oriented, and empowering model for supervision suitable in today's educational climate.

The importance placed on educational supervision, the supervisory practices that are implemented, and the effectiveness of supervision in any given school varies greatly among schools within a district and across districts. Teachers and principals are aware of the disparities that exist in supervision practice and this creates an additional level of concern. Further, many educational personnel continue to link supervision to evaluation, often using the terms interchangeably despite documentation, example, and assurance that these

processes are clearly distinct, and that they support different purposes and outcomes. Although scholars and practitioners acknowledge the limitations and gaps in supervision models and practices that continue to be used in our rapidly changing educational environment, supervision issues have not yet been adequately addressed. Identification, and consistent understanding and implementation of meaningful supervision practices that are clearly aligned to mandated policies and that are responsive to changing beliefs, attitudes, roles, and responsibilities of educational personnel are not yet evident.

Identification of the Problem

Supervision of educational personnel in the school context is a complex, controversial, and confusing issue. Initiating and implementing change to improve educational supervision practice and outcomes have presented a perplexing challenge for scholars and for practitioners for more than three decades. It is this challenge that creates a purpose and context for this research study.

This study explores the current reality of beliefs, attitudes, and actions of educational personnel in relation to supervision in the school context, in search of insights that may help to provide direction in addressing the question: what supervision practices promote commitment to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among educational personnel in the school context?

Sub-questions of the Problem

A number of sub-questions emerge from the research question: (a) how do school-based educational personnel define supervision; (b) what motivates educational personnel to commit to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance; (c) what knowledge, skills, and attitudes of school-based administrators best support a self-directed, growth-oriented supervision model; (d) what organizational practices and cultural influences support a growth-oriented supervision model; (e) how has the relatively recent requirement for Teacher Professional Growth Plans impacted professional development and supervision practice; and (f) what do exemplars of successful, self-directed and growth-oriented supervision models look like in practice?

The interviews that were conducted for the purpose of this study attempted to guide participants' attention to addressing these sub-questions.

Definition of Terms

Five terms are relevant to the study and may require clarification to ensure understanding: (a) educational personnel; (b) school-based administrators; (c) supervision process; (d) educational organizations; and (e) self-directed.

Educational personnel. This refers to certificated educational professionals (i.e., educators who hold permanent teaching certificates and continuing contracts with the school district) who work directly with students in

the classroom setting, specifically classroom teachers, and including counsellors, teacher-librarians, and other teachers not assigned to regular classrooms (e.g., Reading Recovery program teachers). For the purposes of this study, educational personnel are identified as those who hold continuing contracts with their school district. Specific reference to teachers indicates this group of educators. Principals, assistant principals, department heads, and other school-based administrative personnel are included as educational personnel unless specifically referred to separately, or as supervisors, in the study.

School-based administrators. This refers to the school principal, but also includes assistant principals, curriculum coordinators, department heads, and other administrative personnel who comprise the administrative team, and who hold or are delegated with decision-making responsibility and authority in the school context.

Supervision process. This refers to the multitude of activities that are carried out in support of professional growth and performance. Activities may include various formats of collaborative and collegial work; formal and informal classroom observation; conferencing and professional dialogue; mentoring, coaching, and peer support experiences; reflective activities; study groups; professional involvements; consideration of teacher planning, reporting, and communication practices; analysis of student work and achievement results; feedback from students, parents, and colleagues; other professional activities;

and various sources of data collection that provide meaningful feedback to practitioners.

Educational organizations. For the purposes of this study, the focus is limited to school districts and to schools serving kindergarten to grade twelve students.

Self-Directed. Use of this term implies that an individual (i.e., an educational practitioner for the purposes of this study) is motivated, empowered, and assumed to possess the skills to make quality decisions related to planning, carrying-out, and evaluating their work, including their professional experiences and performance.

Significance of the Study

The research problem is timely and responsive to major challenges related to supervision that are of concern to school-based educational personnel, school districts, and individuals and bodies interested in the quality of education provided to students. The study provides grounding in current educational thought in the area of educational supervision, and explores the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of school-based educational personnel toward supervision, professional growth, and quality performance. The data that are collected and the interpretation of phenomena promote insight into needed changes and potential alternatives to commonly used supervision practices. The study is intended to increase awareness of the issues surrounding educational

supervision, of the supervision process and of its desired outcomes. Additional intent is that the study will highlight benefits of quality supervision practice, and will provide insights that may assist school districts in addressing supervision issues.

Linking research to practice is expected to have a positive impact on continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance of school-based educational personnel. Current literature supports the increasing focus on professional development and continuous growth evident in today's educational environment, and affirms the value placed on human resources in educational organizations, most specifically the belief that the most important work in the educational context is that of the teacher in the classroom. It is further hoped that the study will have a positive impact on professional beliefs, attitudes, and actions of school-based educational personnel, on the quality of the educational environment as a professional learning community, and ultimately, on the achievement, overall success, and general educational well-being of students. The success of school improvement initiatives and the achievement of educational organization goals are directly linked to continuous professional growth and to quality performance of school-based educational personnel. It is my belief that a progressive and effective supervision model is a key factor in achieving this goal. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on supervision of educational personnel, a beginning point for

change in educational supervision practice that may help to initiate the development of a meaningful supervision model that is responsive to the needs of school-based educational personnel and to the current educational context.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the research. The research question and the sub-questions are identified, and relevant terms are defined. The significance of the study is discussed, and beliefs and biases are identified. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature, highlighting current thought in educational supervision, professional growth, and performance of school-based educational personnel. Chapter 3 describes the method of the study, selection of participants, data gathering and analysis, trustworthiness, and delimitations and limitations. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 discusses insights that result from the analysis of the data. Chapter 6 shares conclusions and recommendations for practice, suggests questions for further research, shares personal reflections, and provides a summary statement.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The focus of this study is on supervision practices promoting continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among educational personnel in the school context. Priority was given to literature focusing on current thought in educational supervision, on professional growth, and on performance of school-based educational practitioners.

Professional dialogue indicates that neither principals nor teachers find conventional supervision practices meaningful, adequate, appropriate, or effective in today's educational context. Such practices, still widely used for lack of current knowledge or alternatives, do not reflect current organizational thought, nor do they sufficiently support relatively recent changes in provincial and school district policies related to supervision of educational personnel. Educational supervision is a complex, controversial, and often misunderstood concept, despite attempts of scholars and practitioners to provide a simple definition and clarification of its purpose. Mutually satisfactory recommendations for practice have not yet been achieved between educational personnel and educational decision makers. This review of the literature highlights the following topics: (a) defining supervision in the school context; and (b) supporting continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance.

Defining Supervision in the School Context

Literature on educational supervision reflects a range of purposes, foci, and theoretical frameworks and related assumptions. These issues fuel the controversy as to how the relationships between these concepts can best support desirable and effective outcomes for professional growth, for quality teacher and supervisor performance, and for student learning. In reference to supervision, Glickman and Kanawati (1998) contend, "We seem to have encountered a set of problems without solutions, problems which persist despite the many ways in which we have made inquiry into them. The questions around persistent problems have contradictory answers" (in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p. 1252). Pajak (2003) expresses support in his view that "even the experts cannot agree about *who* should provide feedback to teachers, *how* it should be delivered, *when* in a teacher's career supervision is not helpful, or even *why* [it] is important" (p. 4), and further that even "... what *good* teaching looks like" (p. 3) cannot find agreement. Glanz (1997) shares the frustration with the unresolved questions surrounding educational supervision:

> Due to the nebulous, ill-defined, and erratic nature of supervisory practice, the field [of supervision] oscillates among an assortment of theories and proposals that are seemingly conflicting ... the field of educational supervision essentially remains stagnant and inconsequential (p. 201). ... As a professional practice and field of study, supervision

> will continue to wallow in insecurity and remain inconsequential to the instructional process unless greater conceptual clarity can be achieved. (p 203)

Alfonso (1990) expresses concern that the supervision controversy has a negative impact on other areas of education, such as professional development: "Lack of research and continuing disagreement on the definition and the purposes of supervision in education have ... contributed to weak preparation programs for instructional supervisors" (as cited in Ebmeier, 1999, p. 352). Professional development for aspiring instructional supervisors is a challenge to plan, as roles of supervisors endure constant change and are difficult to define in the ongoing confusion that surrounds supervision (Wiles & Bondi, 1996). Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) describe the evolution of supervision over the course of their work since the 1970s as "a 30-year tradition of continuously redefining the field of supervision in response to changing school contexts, policies, and realities" (pp. xiii – xvii). Glanz (1997) suggests that supervision "has been reactive, not proactive, in seeking a sound theoretical and conceptual basis for its work. ... Lacking a conceptual and theoretical center, educational supervision shifts from one proposed theory to another – a field in search of meaning" (p. 198-199). Beach and Reinhartz (2000) recognize that "there does not seem to be one single theory of supervision that is adhered to or accepted by all" (p. 13), and they attempt to address this issue by identifying three theories of

supervision: (a) organizational perspective, where "management of people and resources ... goal accomplishment ... and organizational effectiveness" (p. 13) are emphasized; (b) people perspective, where relationships and sensitivity to teachers' needs and views are emphasized (p. 13); and (c) instructional perspective, where instructional effectiveness and curriculum alignment are the focus (p. 13). Ebmeier (1999) echoes these ideas: "The instructional supervision literature ... reveals no clear theoretical base on which practice is grounded ... we have widely employed practice with weak conceptual grounding" (p. 351), and he offers some explanation in that "authors over the last 30 years have lamented the lack of definitive studies on supervision ... no overall model exists that might serve to guide future research" (p. 351). Lasley (1993) argues that "myopic, biased, and inclined towards pedagogically correct practices, educational supervision as a field needs to broaden its conception of supervision" (as cited in Glanz, 1997, p. 207). Glanz (1997) predicts that although "new models of supervision are likely to be developed in years to come ... they should not limit thought and action by the assumption that a one best model exists" (p. 207). Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon (1998) deliver a caution as supervision discourse seeks solutions to a myriad of dilemmas: "Simplistic solutions are undeniably attractive. ... The predilection for simplistic solutions has brought education in general, and supervision with it, under fire for too readily adopting every passing fad and fancy" (in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p.

1250), and they cite other scholars who issue a similar caution (e.g., Cook; Goldsberry; Hawthorne & Hoffman; Harris; Killian & Post; Sergiovanni & Starrat; Shapiro & Blumberg).

Cook (1998) expresses concern that "research in the field of supervision too often focuses on minor variables and ignores the central purpose of supervision: the enhancement of student learning" (as cited in Glickman et al., 1998, in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p. 1252). Scholars generally include the improvement of instruction in definitions of supervision, often as its primary purpose (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; DuFour, 1991; Ellerymeyer, 1992; Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Wiles & Bondi, 1991). This focus is not new; Bolin and Panaritis (1992) noted that Barr and Burton (1926) defined supervision as "the improvement of classroom practice" (Glickman, 1992, p. 37) almost 80 years ago. Few scholars, however, extend the improvement of instruction to include the improvement of student achievement as the ultimate purpose of supervision.

Frase and Hetze (1990) express a common view among practitioners and scholars that "the teacher is the most important factor in the education process" (p. 120). The focus on the teacher was recognized by Barr in 1931 in extending his earlier definition of supervision to include "educational leadership for the improvement of teaching, to be accomplished through research, training, and guidance" (Bolin & Panaritis, 1992, in Glickman, 1992, p. 37). Wanzare and da

Costa (2000) acknowledge a similar view, suggesting, "The overarching purpose of supervision is to enhance teachers' professional growth by providing them with feedback regarding effective classroom practices" (p. 49). They propose that "teachers at higher levels of adult learning are more likely to ... participate in collective action toward school-wide instructional improvement" (Wanzare & da Costa, 2000, p. 52).

In attempting to resolve the elusiveness of a meaningful definition, clear purpose, and common practice of educational supervision, DuFour (2002) considers a different view, suggesting that we are asking the wrong question; instead of asking how to improve teaching, we should be asking how to improve student learning. He encourages "a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning" (DuFour, 2002, p. 13), and emphasizes, "This shift ... is more than semantics (DuFour, 2002, p. 13). This view is similar to one held by Elmore (2000) in his discussion of standards-based school reform and its impact on teaching and student learning. The focus on student learning and achievement is carried through by educational organizations as highlights of their initiatives and goal statements. The link between teacher expertise, instructional quality, and student achievement is commonly accepted. Unfortunately, the interrelationship between the focus on student learning and achievement, continuous professional growth and quality performance of school-based educational personnel, and educational supervision has not yet been clearly established.

Various dictionaries define supervision as *to oversee or direct (work, workers, etc.), to superintend.* This is congruent with a conventional model of educational supervision that has historically dominated thought and practice, where the purpose of supervision is inspection and evaluation. Requirements related to inspection of teachers, teaching, and school facilities by authorities to ensure compliance to strict standards were recorded in Boston as early as 1709 (as cited in Sullivan & Glanz, 2000, p. 6). In the first published textbook on supervision, Payne (1875) emphasized that teachers must be "held responsible for work performed in the classroom and that the supervisor, as expert inspector, would oversee and ensure harmony and efficiency" (as cited in Sullivan & Glanz, 2000, p. 8). Classroom visitations have long been accepted as a necessary and primary method of inspection; this practice became commonplace as supervision methods evolved. Visitations to the classroom by the supervisor continue to be a widespread practice that reinforces perceptions of supervision as inspection. The historical paradigm of supervision is considered the root of generally negative perceptions among educational practitioners who view this concept of supervision as a means of authority control of teachers' instructional behaviours within a hierarchical relationship (Glickman et al., 2001). These negative perceptions are not unique to the current reality of schools, as dissatisfaction and vocal criticism of supervisors and supervision that relied on inspection were recorded in the early 1900s (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000, p. 14).

Humorous teacher lingo that made uncomplimentary references to *snoopervisors* and *snoopervision* in that period reveal terms that are not unheard of even today, almost a century later.

Reitzug (1997) observed that "teachers were portrayed as deficient and in need of improvement and help from experts" (as cited in Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998, p. 69) in his analysis of various textbooks, published in the decade prior to 1995, although views of teachers as incompetent, weak, and inefficient employees existed long before that, a factor that gave purpose to early practice of inspection as supervision. A traditional view of teachers as passive recipients in the supervision-evaluation process (McGill, 1991, as cited in Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998, p. 87) continues to reinforce negative perceptions of supervision. Beerens (2000) notes that research confirms teacher hostility to supervision, largely due to teachers' lack of involvement in the process and to the lack of impact of supervision on improving practice, observations that are echoed by Sullivan and Glanz (2000). The view of supervision as a practice that is imposed on teachers is also expressed by Krajewski (1997):

> Over the years many practitioners and so-called experts have attempted, without success, to arrive at an agreeable, workable, comprehensible, nonthreatening definition. ... Each supervision proponent or guru has developed his or her own philosophy of supervision, perhaps with a following of believers, but none of the philosophies have gained an

> overall acceptance and understanding by a majority. ... Moreover, many teachers view some of the terms [supervision, collegial supervision, developmental supervision, clinical supervision, instructional supervision, differentiated supervision, peer supervision, cognitive coaching, and others] as a thinly disguised evaluation process, something to be done to them, not with them. (as cited in Glanz & Neville, 1997, p. 34)

Duffy (2000) identifies two dominating paradigms of supervision:

> One is primarily espoused in the literature (clinical supervision and variations of it) and the other is primarily practiced in school (supervision as performance evaluation).... The unspoken and underlying assumption of these traditional approaches was, and continues to be, that if only enough teachers are improved, then teaching and learning throughout a district will also be improved. (p. 126)

Frustration and confusion remain. A unifying definition and framework for educational supervision have never achieved consensus, and are not yet forthcoming in literature. "The field of supervision is in transition and redefinition" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998, as cited in Beach & Reinhartz, 2000, p. 7), and beliefs, values, and practices are locked in an extended process of change.

Evolving change in supervisory thought seeks to embrace current knowledge in organizational development and behaviour, school leadership and administration, and teacher professional growth. However, Gordon (1997) suggests, "The *new* supervision is not new at all! It has been discussed in the literature and available to practitioners all along" (as cited in Glanz & Neville, 1997, p.116). On a similar theme, Glanz (1997) cautions that although new models "may bring to light the latest thinking in the field, they should not blind the field to viable models that already exist" (p. 207). Smyth (1998) is sceptical about changes in supervisory thought and practice, and proposes that whereas the "vocabulary of supervision [may have changed] ... very little change of substance has actually taken place" (as cited in Glickman et al., 1998, in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p. 1250). Cloaking supervision in the perceived less inflammatory term, instructional leadership, is an avenue attempted by Blase and Blase (1999), although they do extend responsibilities and activities encompassed by instructional leadership beyond supervision of classroom instruction alone. Glanz (2000) recognizes the preference of postmodernists for the term, instructional leadership, as more fitting for their interpretation of supervision as "collegial, non-evaluative, and non-directive" (p. 71), in contrast to their interpretation of modern conceptions of supervision as "bureaucratic, hierarchical, and oppressive ... [and stifling to] individual autonomy, especially that of the teacher" (p. 71). Several years before these ideas about instructional

leadership were shared, Glickman (1992) suggested that "the term *instructional supervision* may be outliving its usefulness" (p. 1) and that "when schools become decentralized [as they are in Alberta] ... the term *supervisor* or *supervision* has little meaning to staff members ..." (p. 2). It appears evident that terms alone create, or at minimum, contribute to the confusion surrounding supervision, and that these terms have the potential to interfere with positive change in supervision thought and practice. Smyth (1998) warns that the organizational and managerial theories adapted from the business field to the education field support "more participatory and collegial [supervision, but that this change may be a mask, as] ... processes, procedures, and technologies of control are embedded in the work of teaching" (as cited in Glickman et al., 1998, in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p. 1250). The continuation of evaluative forms of supervisory practice that have relatively recently begun to be referred to in some literature as *performance management* (Bubb & Hoare, 2001; Dean, 2002) or as *performance assessment* (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000) may be viewed as examples of masked changes. The conflict between supervision as a helping action and supervision that is linked to evaluation as a judging action, both real and perceived, is longstanding and continues to be a significant factor in stalling change in educational supervision. Tanner and Tanner (1987) contend, "The basic conflict between these functions [i.e., helping and evaluative functions of supervision] is probably the most serious and, up until now, unresolved problem

in the field of supervision" (as cited in Sullivan & Glanz, 2000, p. 22). Almost 20 years later, definitions that distinguish supervision and evaluation would appear to resolve the conflict, but what may be obvious in theory does not guarantee transfer to practice, largely due to the lingering effects of early models of inspection as supervision. Separating supervision and evaluation as distinct processes continues to create conflict for educational personnel, and the confusion continues to be fuelled by the literature.

Explicit and implicit links between supervision and evaluation are common in literature (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Alberta Learning Integrated Framework to Enhance the Quality of Teaching in Alberta, 1997; Beerens, 2000; Ellermeyer, 1992; Embretson, Ferber & Langager, 1984, as cited in Oliva & Pawlas, 1997; Glatthorn, 1997; Gleave, 1997; Hunter & Russell, 1990; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Oliva & Pawlas, 2004; Petrie, 1982, as cited in Oliva & Pawlas, 1997; Schmidt, 2003). Teacher evaluation as a component of supervision and as a primary task of a supervisor was articulated by William H. Burton in 1922 (as cited in Oliva & Pawlas, 2004, p. 19), although judgement of teacher performance had implied evaluation and had provided purpose for inspection by supervisors for almost 200 years previously. Sometimes, links between supervision and evaluation are found in the guise of accountability and standards (Smyth, 1997, in Glanz & Neville, 1997). Even when supervision and evaluation are discussed separately, supervision is sometimes perceived as a

component of the evaluation process (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Schmidt, 2003) or they are considered to be "complementary functions that ... provide the cornerstones of a comprehensive system of professional growth and accountability" (Nolan & Hoover, 2004, p. 6). "For some theorists and practitioners, the legacy of inspectional supervision lives on in the form of evaluation" (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000, p. 21). Links between supervision and evaluation are difficult to ignore or to distinguish, as might be observed in Sergiovanni and Starratt's (2002) overview of three types of evaluation, two of which combine supervision and evaluation in their identification, namely *supervisory summative evaluation* and *supervisory formative evaluation*, as opposed to administrative evaluation (p. 285). In Alberta, a Policy Position Paper (1995) includes ongoing supervision of individual teachers among specific responsibilities that principals are held accountable for and natural inference of a component of judgment can be made from the duty of "determining whether a teacher's practice is acceptable or unacceptable" (Alberta Education, p. 12). This document suggests that supervision procedures "may include growth-oriented teacher assessments that focus on a specific area(s) of practice" (p. 13), although it does not permit "regularly scheduled, comprehensive evaluations" (p. 13) for continuing contract teachers who hold a Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate. Hazi (1994) suggests that "disentangling the knot of evaluation-supervision may be an impossible and

impractical task" (as cited in Gleave, 1997, p. 272). Glanz (1995) summarizes the dilemma, concluding, "This improvement versus evaluation dilemma, though pervasive, has been only marginally addressed in the literature of supervision and remains unresolved" (as cited in Gleave, 1997, pp. 271-272). In the decade since Glanz's and Hazi's statements, acceptance among scholars and practitioners has been noted, wherein the focus and purpose of evaluation must be clearly differentiated from those of supervision. A recommendation such as one by Danielson and McGreal (2000) that there is "a need to rethink traditional views of staff evaluation and staff development" (p. 15) appears obvious, but does not serve to extend or to guide thinking. Increasing the focus on professional growth and on quality performance, instead of on perceptions about supervision and evaluation, and clearly acknowledging dissatisfaction with current practices may help to create a more urgent appetite for change and for consideration of a new direction (Beerens, 2000). Although Glickman (1992) questions whether the terms *supervisor* or *supervision* have any value or meaning in decentralized schools (p. 2), Glickman et al. (1998) consider the value of supervision seeking professional status (in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p. 1251). They note, however, that supervision lacks three important factors that would define it as a profession: "(a) programs of preparation; (b) certification to practice; and (c) enforcement of ethical standards" (Firth, as cited in Glickman et al., 1998, in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p. 1251). So much remains to be explored;

solutions to decades-old questions about educational supervision are unavailable, and dissatisfaction and issues persist. As Abbey (2000) suggests, "Supervision ... is ripe for change" (as cited in Glanz, 2000, p. 256).

Supporting Continuous, Self-Directed Professional Growth and Quality Performance

The literature is common in emphasizing the importance of meaningful professional growth experiences throughout a practitioner's career (Day, 1999; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2004; Fullan, 1995, as cited in Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; Gabriel, 2005; Glickman et al., 2001; Hammond & Goodwin, 1993; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). Quality feedback and professional development opportunities are deemed essential if educational personnel are to develop to their potential, achieve quality level performance, and provide quality learning experiences for students (Cohen, 2002). Duck (2000) suggests, "Teaching should be a continuing expedition of self-discovery, from growing toward the profession as a student to growing in the profession as a practitioner" (p. 42). He rationalizes that "reflecting on growth toward the profession and planning for growth within the profession are essential for maintaining the freshness of self-renewal and the stamina for effectiveness throughout a career" (Duck, 2000, p. 42). Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) promote renewal as an ultimate level in continuous teacher development, in

support of a supervision model that assumes self-direction and responsibility for continuous growth.

Historically, teachers' perspectives have been largely ignored in the literature, in the development of supervision models, and in the reality of practice, with a perception of teachers as "passive recipients of others' expertise" (McGill, 1991, as cited in Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998, p. 70), and observation echoed by Sullivan and Glanz (2000). A study by Zepeda and Ponticell (1998) attempted to address this by investigating teacher perspectives related to supervision practices. They identified five subcategories of teacher perceptions of

> supervision at its best: ... supervision as validation ... as empowerment ... as visible presence ... as coaching, and ... as a vehicle for professionalism, [and five subcategories of teacher perceptions of] ... supervision at its worst: ... supervision as a dog and pony show ... as a weapon ... as a meaningless/invisible routine ... as a fix-it list, and ... as an unwelcome intervention. (pp. 73-81)

Blase and Kirby (1992) recognized the need to build knowledge from a teacher perspective and designed their research to investigate effective strategies that principals use to influence teacher performance. Their research found that teachers highlighted five strategies used by principals, as instructional leaders, to influence teachers' professional beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours:

> (a) praise and personal attention; (b) clearly stated, challenging, and consistent expectations for teacher behaviours, and for student behaviours and achievement; (c) active teacher participation in decision making and in leadership within the school organization; (d) professional autonomy: freedom to make instructional decisions, and freedom from intrusion and intervention by supervisors; (e) direct assistance for teachers by providing necessary materials and funds, by assisting with discipline issues, by preventing interruption to instructional time, and by appreciation and recognition of teachers through use of small rewards or special activities. (p. 113)

Their continued work on this topic gleaned additional conclusions as desirable principal actions: "... judiciously evoke the power of authority and consistently model effective practice" (Blase & Kirby, 2000, p. 120).

There is agreement in the literature that the focus of supervision needs to be on the improvement of teaching and learning through collaboration, ongoing reflection, and continuous professional growth (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Alberta Learning Teaching Quality Standard Ministerial Order 4.2.1, 1997; Beach & Reinhartz, 1989; Blase & Blase, 1998; Cohen, 2002; Glickman et al., 2001; Gordon, 1997, as cited in Glanz & Neville, 1997; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1991). The literature recognizes the growing trend towards collaborative, collegial, and collective practices as essential support for the

atmosphere of trust and mutual respect necessary for supervision focused on professional growth (Cangelosi, 1991, as cited in Blase & Blase, 1999; Costa & Garmston, 1994; da Costa & Riordan, 1997; Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999; Gabriel, 2005; Garubo & Rothstein, 1998; Glickman et al., 1998, in Firth & Pajak, 1998; Lambert, 1998; Pavan, 1997, as cited in Glanz & Neville, 1997). The trend that relegates teacher isolation to history is not without argument, much like other concepts related to supervision. Huberman (1993) strongly disputes the need for collaborative practices in his belief of the teacher as an "independent artisan" (as cited in Riordan, 1998, p. 8). Nonetheless, scholars generally consider the isolation that is historically pervasive in the teaching profession to be a factor in limiting professional growth, innovation in teaching, and improvement in student learning (Bubb & Hoare, 2001; Ellis, 1993; Fullan, 1990, as cited in DuFour, 1991; Glickman et al., 2001; Holt, 1993; Little, 1987, as cited in Riordan, 1998; Lortie, 1975, as cited in Schmoker, 1996). Glickman et al. (2001) discuss "the legacy of the one-room schoolhouse" (p. 20) of pioneer times as the root of a school culture characterized by the isolation and autonomy of teaching, an institutional belief that continues its "pervasive grip on the minds and actions of many teachers and schools" (p. 20).

The advantages of collaboration and reflective practices are frequently highlighted in literature (Bambino, 2002; Blase & Blase, 1998; Cohen, 2002; Cotton, 2003; da Costa, 1995; Day, 1999; DuFour, 1991; DuFour & Eaker,

1998; DuFour et al., 2004; Gabriel, 2005; Lambert, 1998; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Riordan, 1998; Routman, 2002; Schmoker, 1996). Riordan (1998) explains, "The effective schools literature ... has consistently reported that one of the distinguishing features of effective schools is the existence of a collaborative culture among teachers" (p. 9). Despite the growing emphasis on collegiality and collaboration, coupled with encouragement for collective responsibility for teacher growth and quality performance, a common perception of supervision as a one-to-one relationship between a teacher and the supervisor is pervasive among educational personnel. Provincial and district policies continue to mandate traditional supervision and evaluation practices and relationships; yet, related policies promote collegiality and reflective practice in encouraging professional growth. The bureaucratic and hierarchical implications that can be inferred from policy statements are not clearly aligned with the professional learning community paradigm that has gathered momentum on the path leading to school and learning improvement. An important component of collegial relationships highlights the value of reflection for improving practice, as reflection is based on knowledge and understanding. As recognized by many scholars, Hole and McEntee (1999) explain the value of sharing teaching stories:

> The ordinary experiences of our teaching days are the essence of our practice. [Reflecting] on these experiences – either individually or with

> colleagues – is an entry to improving our teaching ... the life force of teaching practice is teaching and wondering. (p. 34)

Philosophically encouraging reflective practice, Kierkegaard (2000) writes, "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards" (as cited in Costa & Kallick, 2000, p. 60). Costa and Kallick (2000) share the belief of the power of reflection, promoting collegial reflection as a valuable practice that derives maximum meaning from teaching experiences (p. 60). They encourage collegial reflection to gain insight from others, to extend meaning, to affirm commitment to plans, to document learning, and to create a rich knowledge base (Costa & Kallick, 2000, p. 60). Lee and Barnett (1994) suggest, "Reflection is essential to educators' capacity to think not only about their practice, but also about how they think" (p. 16). Glickman et al. (2001) propose that "as supervisors gradually increase teacher choice and control over instructional improvement, teachers will become more reflective and committed to improvement" (p.116), but caution that reflective practice, self-direction, and responsibility for quality performance are goals to work toward, not qualities that can be assumed (p. 60). The nature of teachers' qualities and skills are critical considerations in student learning and performance, and no less critical to their own and to their colleagues' learning and performance.

Darling-Hammond (2001) states, "The single most important determinant of success for a student is the knowledge and skills of that child's

teacher" (as cited in Goldberg, 2001, in Routman, 2002, p. 32); yet, "teacher expertise is routinely devalued" (Routman, 2002, p. 32). Cohen (2002) recommends that the needs of teachers as critical players who make the biggest difference in school reform need to be tended to (p. 532); this is not new, as Beerens (2000) acknowledges, "Educational reformers over the past 12 years have reminded us that, to improve student achievement, we must improve teacher performance and quality. However, McGhan (2002) counsels that we need to be optimistic about what teachers, individually and collectively, can accomplish themselves (p. 539). Beerens (2000) emphasizes, "It is essential that we understand how teachers learn best [and that] ... ultimately, we should seek to develop a process and activities that are meaningful to teachers" (p. 25). The assumptions and processes of adult learning are clearly relevant to supervision in support of continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance.

Motivation is frequently discussed in the context of professional growth, as is teacher risk-taking, efficacy, satisfaction, and self-esteem. A study by Ebmeier (2003) indicates that supervision has a "profound impact on teachers' commitment and efficacy levels, but the paths that influence these variables are complex and indirect (p. 110). Questions remain as to how best to accomplish the goal of meeting individual teacher needs within the context of supervision to support teachers in making skilled and confident decisions that improve teaching

and learning. Greene (1992) presents an important argument in considering necessary elements for meaningful change in supervision practice:

> Teacher supervision does lead to professional development, but not without considerable resources (both personal and financial), effort, goodwill, commitment, and an unshakable vision of teachers as competent professionals able and willing to take control of their own professional lives. (p. 148)

Beliefs and values of teachers as professionals and of teaching as a profession weave through the concepts of professional development, performance, and supervision. Beerens (2000) highlights the belief that "competent educational professionals are always self-directed in their learning ... they also are purposeful at being self-reflective about their own practice, they try new approaches, and they take responsibility to share insights and results with other colleagues" (p. 25). Beliefs and attitudes of and about teachers and professionalism add valuable insights into teacher motivation and commitment toward continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance.

The relationship between supervisors and teachers as a factor in supporting professional growth is common throughout literature. Common characteristics of this relationship include: collegial, collaborative, and collective relationships; valuing the teacher as a professional and as an equal member of the school learning community; valuing teachers' abilities and their

work; supervisor as a developer of talent and as a facilitator; frequent supervisor presence in the classroom; and positive supervisor comments (Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Blase, 1999; Bliss, Firestone & Richards, 1991, as cited in Riordan, 1998; Firth & Pajak, 1998; Gabriel, 2005; Hargreaves, 1994, as cited in Riordan, 1998; McEwan, 2003; Rosenholz, 1989; Wanzare & da Costa, 2000; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). Hierarchical supervisory relationships where teachers are subordinates in an atmosphere of authority and control are relegated to the past, as they do not fit a paradigm that promotes collaboration and shared responsibility in the teacher-supervisor relationship, or recognize and respect professional autonomy. In discussion of key principles of adult learning, Rudney and Guillaume (2003) illustrate the importance of relationships, explaining that "when people feel that they are perceived as trustworthy and capable of success, they are often freed to explore a broad range of practices, to make mistakes, and to analyze their own work in ways that encourage growth" (p. 27).

In discussing factors of student and teacher success, Hilliard (1999) recognizes the importance of knowledge and expertise in teacher practice, but emphasizes, "What matters most is the relationship between the teacher and the student" (as cited in Checkley & Kelly, 1999, p. 60). These thoughts parallel the importance of the teacher-supervisor relationship. Beach and Reinhartz (2000) base their philosophical framework on assumptions "characterized by an open, non-threatening, trusting, and empowering relationship between the teacher and

supervisor, which leads to two-way growth for both" (pp. 9-10). Relationships based on trust are highlighted in the literature as a foundation for collaborative teacher-supervisor work that supports professional growth. Beach and Reinhartz (2000) also include "mutual respect and reliance upon each other" (p. 11) as essential qualities for growth-oriented teacher-supervisor relationships. Coaching, as a supervisory activity carried out by a teacher's supervisor or by a peer, has gained increasing acceptance as a valuable professional growth experience that, like mentorship, is dependent on trust, mutual respect, and co-reliance in a collaborative relationship.

Glickman et al. (2001) propose that effective supervision must match "teachers' developmental stages [and foster] growth towards higher stages of development" (p. 89); both considerations are supported through coaching and mentorship experiences that allow the teacher to control their own development. Similar ideas are included in the teacher involvement framework introduced by Delano (1993), in Beach and Reinhartz's (2000) discussion of a developmental model of supervision, and in the links that Pajak (2003) makes between his classification of four families of clinical supervision (i.e., original clinical models, artistic/humanistic models, technical/didactic models, and developmental/reflective models) and Carl Jung's four basic psychological functions (i.e., intuition, sensing, thinking, and feeling) (pp. 8 - 10). Marczely (1996), too, discusses developmental levels in relation to a self-directed model

of professional development. These scholars recognize that teachers are at different conceptual levels, different commitment levels, and different life stages of development. They suggest that supervisors can address these differences by matching appropriate supervisory practices to teachers as individuals, but do not adequately recognize how these practices might address collective needs within a professional learning community. Glickman et al. (2001) emphasize the importance of the supervisor's awareness of personal educational philosophy and supervisory beliefs. The literature emphasizes the need for principals, as instructional leaders and supervisors, to be aware of their beliefs, values, and assumptions in relation to supervision (i.e., their supervisory platform). Their supervision experiences as teachers being supervised and, in many instances, as supervisors in different school contexts, can help to guide their reflection. Awareness of experiences and questioning the effectiveness of those experiences in promoting continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance can help principals to define their supervisory style and the supervisory approach with which they feel most comfortable. Self-awareness, like reflection, provides a base for further learning and skill development as a supervisor. Knowledge and competency in a variety of supervisory platforms allows the principal, as supervisor, to be flexible and accommodating in their practice. Despite some disagreement about the benefit of supervision to teachers and to student learning, Wanzare and da Costa (2000) highlight instructional

supervision as "an important component of an effective, comprehensive teacher professional development program" (p. 52). In light of the many conflicting demands on principals' time, a critical question is whether the substantial time and focused attention required for effective supervision activities as an instructional leader are given priority. Scholars and practitioners agree that the required commitment of time and attention are often not experienced in practice, adding to concerns related to supervision (Ellermeyer, 1992). Lambert (2002) suggests that these issues might be resolved by developing and using the talents of teachers (p. 37) in support of supervision that can maintain the focus on continuous professional growth through quality professional development activities. Quality professional development activities clearly present a strong voice in the supervision debate while recognizing the interrelationship with other important factors.

School culture, and organizational structures and routines, are considered important influences in promoting continuous, self-directed professional growth. Variables commonly presented in the literature include reference to: collaborative planning and collegial relationships; the school as a community of learners; high expectations; shared goals; a nurturing school culture that commits to continuously improving learning for teachers and students; clear, two-way communication between supervisor and teacher; a shared vision; strategies that alleviate teacher isolation; time for collaboration, and for

professional dialogue about teaching and learning; and results orientation (Blase & Blase, 1999; Dean, 2002; DuFour et al., 2004; Garubo & Rothstein, 1998; Haughey & Ratsoy, 1993, as cited in Woitas, 1996). The prevailing educational climate of excellence and quality extends to expectations for teacher performance to be nothing less than outstanding (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). In the best interests of students and of student learning and achievement, the educational service that is available to them is of critical importance.

A variety of practices and models are presented in the literature in support of continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance, including cognitive coaching, reflective practice and self-evaluation, self-directed supervision, mentoring, peer coaching, critical friends groups, informal supervision, collegial study groups, peer support groups, action research, inquiry-based supervision, professional networks and retreats, looking at student work protocols, teacher think tanks, professional conversations, site visits, professional portfolios, and various actions characteristic of a professional learning community (Bambino, 2002; Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Blase, 1999; Boss, 2000; Costa & Garmson, 1994, as cited in McGreal, 1997; DuFour et al., 2004; Goldsberry, 1997, as cited in Glanz & Neville, 1997; Hunter & Russell, 1990; Marczely, 1996; Nolan & Hoover, 2004; Oliva & Pawlas, 1997; Ovando, 2000, as cited in Glanz, 2000; Routman, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1991; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000; Winsor & Ellefson,

1998). Almost all of these practices are strongly tied to professional collaboration, but by no means are a comprehensive list. Neither are these practices unique to our educational context. One example of a well-established practice that supports continuous professional improvement and quality performance through collaboration and reflective activities, but that has not yet become widely known, used, or accepted in our school context, originates in Japan. Japanese research lessons, *kenkyuu jugyou*, are a component of routine practice that are deeply embedded in a professional culture committed to collaborative planning, collegial observation and critique, and continual professional improvement and refinement of practice, collectively and individually (Lewis, 2002). *Kounaikenshuu*, a process that recognizes teachers' expertise, their willingness to coach and mentor colleagues, and their confidence in taking risks in collectively developing and attempting promising instructional practices, further fosters qualities similar to the more widely known professional learning community model (Boss, 2000). Critical self-reflection and critique, *hansei,* is valued in Japanese culture (Lewis, 2002) and further serves to promote continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance in the educational context, but the baring of weaknesses to colleagues is a practice that not all educational personnel may be ready to adopt in our context. Despite the growing enthusiasm of educational personnel for meaningful collaborative practices that light the way for continuous, self-directed

professional growth and quality performance, the reality is that traditional practices such as clinical supervision garner great respect as a supervisory activity. Clinical supervision, in its various forms, continues to be widely accepted as a supervisory practice in our context, but this model is debated as a vehicle for professional growth (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; Firth & Pajak, 1998; Goldhammer, Anderson & Krajewski, 1980, as cited in Sergiovanni, 1991; Oliva & Pawlas, 1997; Pajak, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1991). This debate, along with others, continues to fuel the supervision controversy. It is evident that despite knowledge of practices that hold promise for promoting change in educational supervision, practice in the school context continues to be strongly rooted in the past.

Chapter Summary

Glanz (1995) expresses concern that "the gaps in our knowledge of public school supervision are vast" (as cited in Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998, p. 87). Undoubtedly, current literature and research in the area of educational supervision are relatively incoherent. This confusion acknowledges the complexity of the supervision process, and the uncertainty of scholars and practitioners in identifying assumptions and practices that meet the needs of teachers and of educational organizations in achieving collective goals of improving learning for students. Supervision in the school context is in the midst of rapid change and no small degree of controversy. As expressed by Glickman

et al., (1998), "The immediate future of supervision will be embedded in current conflicts about standards, productivity, and core learnings, as well as the concepts of professionalism, authority, autonomy, and local control" (in Firth & Pajak, 1998, p. 1257). Continuing research on supervision that promotes continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among educational personnel in the school context is a priority need, with teachers' perspectives a necessary and critical focus. This will help to provide a realistic foundation for developing supervision beliefs, values, and practices that align current thought with teacher needs in the school context.

In supervision, as in education, change is as necessary as it is inevitable. Positive change is the goal, but change is never easy. Pellicer (2003) provides a reflective summary of necessary conditions for positive change to be achieved: (a) we must be aware of the problems that exist; (b) we must constantly question and not be satisfied with the status quo, and want things to be different; (c) we must be willing "to make personal sacrifices to move forward" (p. 174); and (d) we must accept that change is difficult and that it takes time and commitment (p. 174). In seeking the path for the supervision journey that leads educational personnel to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance, a collective desire for solutions to ongoing dilemmas, the ability to ask the right questions, the courage to seek solutions from within, and a

willingness to experience a degree of discord and discomfort are keys to opening the doors to the positive changes that are necessary.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Method of the Study

The focus of this study is to explore the characteristics of supervision practices promoting continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among educational personnel in the school context. A qualitative research design was selected to encourage a rich description of the essence of supervision practice as experienced by school-based educational personnel. Interviews were used to facilitate an in-depth study of respondent beliefs, attitudes, reflections, and insights. As a descriptive and interpretive study, the focus was on developing a body of knowledge in its natural context and from the perspective of the respondents involved in the phenomenon.

Research Design

This chapter discusses (a) the participants, (b) the pilot study, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis techniques, (e) delimitations and limitations of the study, and (f) trustworthiness of data and data analysis.

Respondent group. Certificated educational personnel in site-based decision-making settings, specifically schools serving kindergarten to grade twelve students, comprised the target population. The accessible population included school-based administrators and certificated teachers from over 200

school sites in a large urban school district in western Canada. A purposeful sample was drawn from professional staff who held a full-time continuing contract with the identified district, and who had a minimum of five years of experience in their respective position and at least two school-site experiences, or who had been supervised by at least two school principals. Criteria for selection also included participation on at least one district or provincial level committee in the last two years. Potential respondents included principals and teachers that I was acquainted with or who were referred to me by senior district administrators. One-half of the sample of six respondents were classroom teachers, purposely selected to allow directed attention to the teachers' voice, while maintaining a balance with the voice of school-based administrators. Gender balance was sought and achieved. Two respondents were selected at each school organization level: (a) elementary (i.e., kindergarten to grade six); (b) junior high school (i.e., grades seven to nine); and (c) high school (i.e., grades ten to twelve). Respondents' schools ranged in school enrolment size, in number of school-site administrators, in number of teachers on staff, in programs offered, in geographical location, and in demographics, as related to the nature of students served.

Pilot study. An interview schedule was developed over a period of several months. Potential interview questions were based on review of relevant literature, discussion with colleagues, and on my experiences as a teacher and as

a principal. Initially, the interview schedule was shared with a school-based administrator and with two teachers from different school locations selected from the same large, urban district; these individuals were not invited to participate in the study. These individuals provided feedback related to the nature of the interview questions, and the total number of questions was subsequently reduced. Following this step, a semi-structured interview format was practised with two researcher colleagues who commented on the interview style and provided additional feedback about interview questions. Finally, the interview format was piloted with a teacher who was not selected to participate in the study, but who met all the criteria required for participant selection. My previous professional contact with this teacher gave me confidence that this person would be honest and direct in providing feedback to me. Further, this teacher had expressed strong views about supervision processes, professional growth, and quality performance in our previous professional conversations. The individual demonstrated interest in the study, although expressed regret that there would not be involvement in the study beyond the scope of the pilot study.

The information obtained from the pilot sample was reviewed to determine the relevance and comprehensiveness of responses in relation to the intent of the study, and several questions were subsequently reworded for improved clarity. In response to additional feedback, modifications to the wording of two questions and to the interview schedule order were made before

the formal interviews were conducted. The interview questions were then clustered to address each sub-problem (see Appendix).

Data collection. Data were collected in two ways: (a) personal interviews; and (b) review of relevant school documents. Over a three-week period, semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents at their respective schools or at convenient locations that they approved. Each interview slightly exceeded one hour in length, conducted at a time convenient to the individual respondents. Respondents were offered the opportunity to respond to interview questions in writing in the event of discomfort with a personal interview format, but no respondents requested this option. Follow-up to personal interviews made use of two-way electronic dialogue and telephone contact with respondents to clarify and to extend responses.

Initial contact with potential participants was made by telephone to describe the nature and purpose of the study, and to invite participation in the study. Potential participants were advised of their right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time and were assured confidentiality. Individuals who agreed to participate in the study were provided with a written introduction to the study, and confirmation of their interview date, time, and location. They were asked to sign a consent form before proceeding with the study. Respondents were provided with demographic questions to complete prior to their interview, along with a list of proposed interview questions. They were

asked to provide relevant school documentation, if available, (e.g., personnel supervision or performance appraisal plans, supervisory data collection and feedback instruments, and school educational plan and budget documentation), to complement and confirm interview responses. Demographic information was confirmed and assurance of confidentiality was again made before beginning the interviews. Respondents were advised that they would be identified only through pseudonyms and fictitious school names in the study.

The semi-structured interview format allowed the interview to be guided, in part, by responses of respondents to help to increase objectivity and substance. During the actual interviews, I deviated from the interview schedule occasionally to probe for additional information or to clarify responses. I consciously strived not to direct responses or to allow dialogue to stray from topic. Respondents were invited to elaborate beyond the scope of the interview schedule, and to share personal insights and other relevant comments at the end of their interview. They were also encouraged to contact me with any additional thoughts after their interview.

On request, all respondents granted permission to audiotape the interview. I transcribed the interviews to reinforce my familiarity with responses and as an additional way to ensure confidentiality. Respondents were asked to review my interpretations and the summary of their interviews, and were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts for confirmation or revision of

information. Respondents were aware that a second interview would be requested if I needed to clarify any information. Although this was not necessary, telephone contact with two respondents at their request served to add content to their responses. With respondent permission, I took notes during the interviews to assist me in clarifying ideas and revisiting selected points during the interview. I also maintained a journal throughout the research process, recording my observations, perceptions, ideas, and reflections about the process, the participants, and the context.

Data analysis. Data were examined for patterns and themes through interpretational and content analysis as interviews were conducted, as transcripts were prepared, and as documents were reviewed. Categories were developed through an inductive and a deductive approach. Initially, a review of the literature indicated a number of categories that could be expected to emerge, including: (a) negative teacher perceptions about supervision; (b) effective strategies for continuous, self-directed professional growth; (c) teacher needs for autonomy and professional respect; and (d) characteristics of supportive and collaborative practices of principals and of school districts. These and other categories became evident during the interview and data analysis process. Themes and sub-themes were coded to organize data collected in the study. I began by reviewing each line of the individual transcripts and any notes I had made during the interview process, and by examining any school documentation

that respondents were able to provide. Constant comparison occurred, and categories were identified, reviewed, and revised several times until each was distinct. Throughout the data analysis process, I focused on the relationship of the themes to supervision, the central concept of the study, and on how each theme impacted individual respondents, as described in the supervision experiences they shared with me. Two researcher colleagues were asked to review the categories as an expert panel to affirm categories and themes; these were then discussed with the study supervisor.

Delimitations. The study was delimited to three school principals and three certificated teachers employed by the large urban district specified for the study. The six participants held continuing positions in their respective schools at the time of the study. Principals and teachers with a minimum of five years experience in at least two school sites, and who had participated on at least one district level or provincial professional committee were considered for the study. It should be noted that participant experience as educators in the selected school district ranged from five years to thirty-two years of experience. In addition, each participant had experienced supervision by more than two supervisors during their educational career.

Undoubtedly, many potential participants were overlooked in making selections for this study. However, the number of participants was kept to a small group, considered a workable size suitable for a phenomenological study.

In finalizing my selection, I made the assumption that the diversity of participant experiences would allow a broad view of beliefs, attitudes, and experiences related to supervision, professional growth, and quality performance.

Data collection was limited to the semi-structured interview format, though respondents were offered the option of providing written responses. Relevant school documentation that was provided by participants was reviewed to confirm information.

Further delimitations can be attributed to my shortcomings. My skills as an interviewer, the depth of my perceptions, and the accuracy of my interpretations and data analysis are limited to the context of my experiences. To reduce the impact of these limitations, I encourage readers of this study to extend my analysis, findings, and discussion to include the context of their personal experiences.

Limitations. There is potential for problems in selection. Respondent group selection was based on professional relationships, demographics, or referral. Further, selection was limited to volunteers in the identified school district and by potential participant willingness to participate when approached by me. The comprehensiveness of responses may have been affected by the confidence of each respondent, and by their ability to articulate thoughts and ideas. The level of comfort in sharing personal thoughts and the relationship that each respondent had with me may have affected the openness with which

responses were shared. There was also potential for researcher bias, and the possibility of leading questioning during interviews to obtain desired responses. I was aware of these potential concerns and did my best not to allow these to influence the way that each interview was conducted. A researcher colleague was asked to review interview tapes after the second interview was conducted to minimize possible threats to validity.

The nature of the study does not allow generalizability across other settings, as data reflect only the experiences and perceptions of the respondents, and is therefore applicable only to this select group. However, thick description of respondents and of their educational settings, and of the patterns that emerge within their responses allow for transferability of the insights gained to similar settings.

Trustworthiness of the data and of the data analysis. Trustworthiness of the data and of the data analysis was increased in several ways: (a) the interview schedule was reviewed by three educational professionals before it was piloted; (b) clarification and elaboration of responses were encouraged during the interview process, with provision for a second interview and electronic dialogue, as necessary; (c) respondents were offered the option of providing written responses; (d) member checking of data and of my interpretation of responses was completed to increase the accuracy of descriptions, and to reduce potential for researcher bias; (e) school documents were reviewed for confirmation of

information shared during the interview process; (f) researcher colleagues, as a panel of experts, reviewed and confirmed the categories and themes; and (g) thick description of respondent characteristics, context and narratives are provided in the context of the study. In addition, all respondents granted permission for their interviews to be audiotaped. This ensured accuracy in transcribing responses and decreased potential for misinterpretation by providing data in context. An audit trail of audiotapes, transcripts, interview notes, school documentation, and the personal journal has been organized and is now securely stored, in the event they are required at a future date.

Personal Beliefs and Biases

Early in the study, I felt it was important to articulate my beliefs about educational supervision, professional growth, and quality performance, and to reflect on my experiences as a school-based administrator and as a classroom teacher. Through awareness of my beliefs and of any possible biases, I felt I would be better able to prevent any influence on or distortion of data in any area of this study.

I believe reflective practices, collaborative relationships, and collective responsibilities within the school setting are the basis for continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Of utmost importance are collegial relationships built on mutual trust and respect, with evident caring and honesty, and that there is individual and collective commitment to and

responsibility for quality results. Equally important are a common vision of the supervision process, its purpose, and desired outcomes.

I view the role of principal as supervisor as one of facilitator, supporter, and colleague, providing encouragement to teachers to continually reflect on their practice to guide their decisions in improving their teaching practice, individually and collectively. It is my opinion that teachers, as professionals, benefit from autonomy in making decisions that affect them and their work. I recognize that not all teachers are ready or willing to accept full responsibility for monitoring their performance, or for initiating and implementing actions for continuous professional growth. I recognize, too, that a common understanding and acceptance among educational personnel of what it is to be a professional and of how teaching is viewed as a profession has not yet been achieved.

I do have concern that school-based educators may not be as knowledgeable as they need to be about the Teaching Quality Standards document, and that Professional Growth Plans are often not undertaken with the seriousness and the commitment required to maximize professional growth. Nonetheless, I do believe that the majority of school-based educational personnel do have a desire for continual learning and improvement. I believe, too, that educators have an intuitive desire for quality performance, and for providing the best possible opportunities for their students' learning and success.

It is my impression that supervision models that effectively promote reflective practices that empower educational personnel with responsibility for continuous, self-directed growth, and that support quality performance, do exist. Unfortunately, I do not believe that such models are widely acknowledged or consistently implemented. Further, though changes in supervision practices may be evident in some existing situations, I do not believe that the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of educational personnel in general demonstrate evidence of keeping pace with these changes or of giving the area of supervision the degree of importance that is needed.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study employs a multiple case study approach that included six certificated educators as participants. The participants were selected from over 200 schools in a large, site-based decision-making setting in an urban district in western Canada. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a review of relevant school documentation that was provided by participants. A pilot study was conducted before the formal study commenced. Threats to validity and steps taken to increase trustworthiness were described. The method of data collection was discussed. In analyzing the data, themes and categories were identified, reviewed by respondents, and confirmed by researcher colleagues. These themes provide a structure around which data are reported in this study.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter has been organized into three sections. The first section provides a summary of background information about provincial and district policy specific to teacher growth and performance, and to supervision. The second section considers principal and teacher perceptions about supervision. The third section examines supervision factors influencing continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Subsections discuss school and district organizational culture, professional skills and behaviours of principals and teachers, professional relationships, and other factors, such as time, money, and opportunity. Each of these sections report principal and teacher experiences, beliefs, and perceptions in the context of school-based supervisory practice, and discuss whether the results of supervision have positively influenced their professional growth, their performance, their motivation to meet professional standards, and their commitment to continuous improvement.

Background Information

Provincial policy. Beginning in 1994, government three-year plans for education in Alberta included recognition that teacher quality and competency are integral to enhancing the quality of education in the province. These plans initiated work to clearly articulate standards for quality teaching and resulted in

the development of a policy position paper, An Integrated Framework to Enhance the Quality of Teaching in Alberta, in 1996. This policy position paper defined responsibilities and accountabilities, and identified delegation of authorities in recognition of provincial goals, and of professional development consistent with the Quality Teaching Standard. Subsequently, Ministerial Order #016/97, Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta, was approved on May 14, 1997:

> Pursuant to Section 25(1)(f) of the *School Act*, I approve the following as the Teaching Quality Standard which shall apply to teacher certification, professional development, supervision and evaluation, and which is supported by descriptors of selected knowledge, skills and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers.... (Alberta Education, 1997)

Following the approval of the Ministerial Order, Provincial Policy 2.1.5, *Teacher Growth, Supervision, and Evaluation*, came into effect, the policy being updated in January 2003. Provincial Policy 2.1.5 states:

> School authorities, ECS operators, superintendents, principals and teachers must work together to achieve the teaching quality standard. All teachers are expected to practice consistently in keeping with the standard. (Alberta Education, 2003)

School district policy. The large urban school district identified for the purposes of this study developed Board policy, as required by Alberta Education, in support of the provincial policy on Teacher Growth, Supervision, and Evaluation. Board policy on staff performance states:

> The board believes that an ongoing process of continuous growth, supervision, and evaluation for improved staff performance is essential in achieving the mission of the district. The board believes that all staff are responsible and accountable for meeting the performance standards of their positions. (Edmonton Public Schools, 2004a)

This policy supports a Board Administrative Regulation on staff performance:

> Staff members should actively participate in planning, evaluating, enhancing or improving their performance on a continuous basis. All teachers are expected to meet the Teaching Quality Standard. The principal/supervisor shall be responsible for the supervision of the staff member's performance on an on-going basis. ... Supervision by teachers, by principals/supervisors and/or their designates is intended to assist teachers in meeting their professional responsibilities and to enhance teaching knowledge, skills and attributes that maximize student learning. It should be ongoing, supportive and collegial in nature.... (Edmonton Public Schools, 2001)

This district highlights staff performance in its Mission Statement: "The mission is being accomplished through exemplary staff performance ..." (Edmonton Public Schools, 2005b), and the Legacy Statement created by the Board of Trustees in March 2005 specifically references "celebrated excellence in teaching ...." (Edmonton Public Schools, 2005c). Board priorities, too, include specific reference to teacher performance: "to ensure high quality teaching and learning ..." (Board Policies and Regulations Manual, Basic Beliefs, Commitments and Expectations, issued February 2005). Principals in this district are responsible for "the selection, assignment, performance management, and professional growth and development of all staff" (Edmonton Public Schools, 2005a, p. 9). The district's Three-Year Educational Plan 2004 – 2007 states district standards for staff performance and defines what staff are required to do in support of achieving the standard, including:

> ...to demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement; acquire and apply appropriate training and skills; accept responsibility for personal performance; develop skills in self-evaluation.... (Edmonton Public Schools, 2004b, p. 6)

Written evaluations are not completed in this district once a teacher has been granted a continuing contract, except in specific situations, such as unsatisfactory performance or career advancement decisions. A continuing contract is generally offered relatively early in a teacher's career with the

district. District principals may, but are not required to, provide a reflective letter to teachers:

> From time to time, principals/supervisors may provide teachers with a reflective letter of reference/feedback outlining information and insights about their teaching practice and identifying behaviours and practices that are worthy of recognition. The reflective letter of reference/feedback shall not be a comprehensive evaluation of the teacher's performance. (Edmonton Public Schools, 2001)

Reflective letters are placed in teachers' respective district Personnel record files. Principals do engage in a formal self-appraisal and performance review process with the Superintendent of Schools once every three years, with the written results of each review included in the principals' respective Personnel record files.

Provincial teachers' association policy. Since 1998, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) policy on *Professional Growth, Supervision, and Evaluation* has included a directive in support of the provincial policy:

> 15.B.2 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge all school boards to adopt growth, supervision and evaluation practices that are consistent with the government's Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy (1998 02 26) [2000/03]. (Alberta Teachers Association, 2004)

The ATA further highlights the critical nature of continuous professional growth in its long-range policy statement on Professional Development (most recent update: June 2004).

Provincial policy defines requirements related to professional growth, supervision, and evaluation, indicates roles and responsibilities of principals, as supervisors, and of teachers, and outlines minimum standards for teacher performance. District and teachers' association policies support provincial mandates. District policy and its related documents help to interpret and to clarify the general nature of provincial policy statements. Despite sometimes vague knowledge and understanding of educational personnel, particularly of teachers, of policy requirements and related documents, these mandates influence beliefs, attitudes, and practices at the school level. Whether the influence is based on accurate knowledge, on experiences, or on myth, simple awareness alone colours perceptions of supervision.

Perceptions of Supervision

Principals and teachers are ultimately responsible for carrying out provincial and district policies and regulations. At individual school sites, the principal and teachers are the key stakeholders in facilitating the success of supervision practice in promoting continuous, self-directed, professional growth and quality performance. As such, these two groups were asked to share their

experiences and perceptions about supervision, and to reflect on how the supervision that they experienced during their careers served to support continuous, self-directed, professional growth and on how supervision helped them to ensure quality performance. Their responses considered both strengths and weaknesses of supervisory practice, and of its outcomes.

To begin, the principals and teachers were asked to articulate their definition of supervision in the school context, and to comment on the value of supervision and on how they thought their colleagues felt about supervision. As evident in the literature, a common definition of supervision was elusive, despite the fact that respondents were colleagues in the same school district, and that all or a substantial part of their respective educational careers had been with that district. Few respondents provided what could be noted as a definition for supervision, although all made an attempt, often resulting, though, in commentary about outcomes of supervision or perceived purposes. Principal Jan suggested that supervision is

> a process where we ensure that we're providing teachers with support and pressure at the same time to meet the needs of students, and to ensure that they develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that they need to be successful in any particular year.

She commented, "Supervision doesn't mean I'm pinpointing and I'm watching with eyes, but it does mean that I'm monitoring, always gathering information,

always looking for our strength, but also our weak points." Another principal, Natasha, was initially somewhat tentative in her attempt to define supervision; yet, she passionately expressed her understanding of supervision:

> That's the role a principal plays in the sense that you are overseeing, and I guess that supervision is an overseeing kind of thing; evaluation is a little deeper. And, evaluation has negative connotations sometimes and especially for teaching personnel, but supervision means that I am out there, and I am seeing and I am observing and I am watching and I am coaching and I am encouraging and I am committed to individuals to make sure they can be the best that they can be. ... It's a huge part that a principal plays, I think, but it has to be almost invisible. Like good discipline, good supervision is invisible in the sense that people don't have a sense of that, that they're being watched and observed, and that you're analyzing the work that they're doing. ... It's a huge role that I play and one that as a fairly new principal, that I'm learning to be better at, and I think you grow into it in many ways. It's absolutely essential because I think it's through supervision and it's through the role that the principal plays that you steer the school. It's even more than the culture of the school. It's when you see the red flags come up or good things are going on that you can really grab hold of and sort of steer the ship. ... I think supervision also has to do with celebrations and it also has to do

> with honest conversations about what is not working. ... I think we are looking at supervision more as a support in terms of improving practice, rather than something that is simply reporting. ... Supervision to me is key in the sense that we need to make sure ... I want teachers to think that I am walking alongside of them, and that I am helping them to grow and mature, and to develop and constantly refine their techniques or their skill sets. That's what I see supervision as being, as a very positive, collegial thing.

Principal Adam felt that his understanding of supervision and his knowledge of the process and its practices had evolved during his six years of experience as a principal, and that his views and practices would continue to change because of his professional experiences.

> I still divide it [supervision] into two parts. There's the supervision that has to do with the operation of school: are people in class on time, are they doing all the supervisory things which are really legal obligations that I would consider. We promise the public [that] kids will be supervised, teachers will be in classes on time, [and] instruction will start on time. Then there's the supervision of what they actually should be doing in class and that's the teaching and learning. More and more, I've been trying to do different things with that. (Principal Adam, Pine Valley School)

Most, if not all, educators would agree that supervision helps to ensure that students are provided with quality learning experiences through the quality teaching practices of teachers. Interestingly, except for Principal Jan, who alluded to the need for teachers to focus on meeting the needs of students, only one other respondent, Teacher Beth, referred to service to students in her attempt to define supervision. Teacher Beth shared a personal definition that demonstrated her heartfelt commitment as a teacher to her students:

> It's making sure you do what's best for kids. For me, that's the bottom line for it. To me, that's what we're here to do. We have many hats. I believe that it's making sure that whatever happens under this roof is what's in the very best interest of kids in terms of their total education, in order to help them move ahead and ultimately be productive citizens. As adults, when they grow up they'll be able to find some area and have the skill sets that they need, to be able to go ahead and do something that is meaningful and contribute to society as a whole, and contribute in their family. In their sphere of influence, wherever they are. That's why supervision is very important.

Teacher Beth connected what is best for students to what she is required to teach within the mandate of the approved provincial curriculum:

> Along with that [doing what is best for kids] is to make sure the curriculum that is set out for us is part of that. Obviously, some people have spent a lot of time, hopefully, setting it out because they think that is what's best for kids. And it's making sure that curriculum is followed, that policy is followed in that way, from Alberta Learning [i.e., Alberta Education] and to your local school district. But, ultimately, [supervision] is what's best for kids.

Martin, a teacher, commented about expressing a definition of supervision: "Very difficult comes to mind!" The inability to phrase a definition clearly, concisely, or accurately, if this was possible, was a common challenge for respondents, if inference could be made from the number of hesitant smiles and shifts in position that were noted during the interviews when they were asked to provide a definition of supervision in the school context.

Respondents all agreed that supervision is a necessary practice in the school setting. Some respondents felt that supervision is an essential component of accountability and of meeting standards, some linked supervision to personal motivation to meet professional responsibilities, and some noted supervision as a necessary support to professional growth and quality performance. Respondents deemed supervision practice a necessary part of school-based experiences, regardless of whether they held positive perceptions of supervision. Principal Jan expressed:

> I believe supervision is necessary because you're accountable for the outcome of our students' achievement, and anytime you want to monitor something or you're responsible for the final product, then you must have some type of supervision. It's a dipstick of how well you're doing. It's a way of refocusing yourself if you're not meeting the needs of students.

For some professionals, linking supervision to accountability provides a clear purpose for supervision and rationalizes its essential nature. Teacher Beth viewed accountability as the main purpose of supervision:

> I believe it [supervision] is necessary because I think we all need accountability, no matter where we are. We want to believe we can be independent, and have all the initiative and do everything we need to do without someone looking over us to make sure we do it. But, I really think that's a little bit of pie in the sky attitude, because I think when it come right down to it, I do a better job when I'm accountable and when I'm called to a standard. I don't think that I can be both; I can necessarily do the best job of making myself accountable and also doing it. I don't think anybody can. We need accountability in our personal life and we need it in our professional life. It's important and I don't think we always think we need it, but I think it's necessary.

Another teacher, Kathy, expressed similar beliefs in that supervision is necessary, and that there is a connection between supervision and accountability: "I can't imagine not being held accountable. We all need to be held accountable." Principal Natasha commented that district supervision policy helped her to be more accountable to her staff:

> [Supervision is] actually what makes me more accountable to staff to say we've got to keep doing this because I think if we stop doing it, I think there could be some negative, I think we could slip, I think we could go backwards. It holds me more accountable to encourage staff to look at the process of reflective letters and supervision as a good thing and as a supportive thing.

Although accountability emerged as a clear purpose of supervision, with some respondents indicating accountability as the primary purpose, respondents did not appear to dwell on this. Other reasons for supervision as a necessary practice in the school setting, although not identified as primary purposes, nonetheless received more extensive commentary than did accountability. Professional growth and effective performance were themes that threaded through all interviews, clearly linked to supervision as outcomes, if not as purposes, for supervision. Maintaining support for supervision as a necessary

practice, Teacher Kathy emphasized professional growth and effective performance, and not accountability, in her response:

> I think [supervision] is very necessary. I think we all need to be supervised every now and then so that we don't stagnate, so that we are, in fact, being effective in the classroom as teachers. I have pretty big responsibility in this society. I mean, all those doctors and lawyers come through my hands first, you know, so I had better know what I'm doing, and I better be well equipped and well prepared. Otherwise, I shouldn't be there.

Another teacher, Beth, alluded to professional development as a purpose for supervision, believing that supervision "is to help people grow because supervision really encourages you to be a learner, which is necessary if you're a teacher. You really have to be a learner." Teacher Martin almost echoed Beth's thoughts:

> Part of supervision, I think is professional development, where the teacher learns, and at no point in my career, or in anyone else's career will I have finished learning, so because supervision and professional development, and our development professionally, go hand in hand, you never finish, so you always need that supervision to varying degrees.

Dialogue on supervision ultimately leads to comments about the reactions of self or colleagues to supervision experiences. All respondents expressed awareness that to varying degrees, their colleagues held negative views about supervision. Some respondents also harboured disillusionment and unpleasant memories of supervision they experienced in the course of their careers. Clearly, supervision is an emotional experience for teachers. Unfortunately, remnants of dissatisfaction and resentment are very difficult to shed, and these colour perceptions of supervisory practices and promote wariness when the topic is discussed. Overall, there is a sense of general acceptance that supervision can be a controversial topic for professional dialogue, and those beliefs and experiences mark all points across the spectrum.

Teacher Martin expressed acceptance of diverse views on supervision, noting that a few colleagues tended to view almost anything with negativity and pessimism. Other respondents shared similar thoughts, and a few indicated that they, too, allowed themselves to be influenced by negative thoughts and actions at times, admittedly sabotaging potential benefits of supervisory actions and experiences. Teacher Kathy, with more than a decade of teaching experience, was unable to respond when asked to describe a satisfactory supervisory experience: "Quite frankly, I can't think of one. Isn't that sad? That's got to be a statement in itself." Teacher Martin finds negative attitudes frustrating, and he

tries to counteract these by helping colleagues to acknowledge positive supervisory actions and situations that do exist in his school setting:

> People are people and there's a whole range of things. It goes from the very happy to the very cynical, and you see the full range in varying doses. You hear some people, who I call the "Eeyores," you know, Eeyore in Winnie the Pooh, and whenever anything happens, it's always wrong, there's always some bad things that come out of it. It's the Eeyore Syndrome and you always get the odd person who's like that, so no matter whatever happens, it's negative. It's their attitude. And they would feel negative about supervision, too. It's frustrating to be confronted by those people, and what I do, is I always be positive, not extra-positive, not sickly, horrible, sugary positive, but positive. And, I've been a little confrontational. I don't say, "No, you're wrong," I just give a positive and leave it there. And, some of the people who are very happy, I laugh at them, I laugh with them and I think that's great.

Respondents shared thoughtful memoirs and reflections about their own and their colleagues' experiences with supervision. Background experiences clearly coloured perceptions of supervision to at least some degree, and may be a factor in what appears to be a fairly common negative thought pattern towards supervision. Consciously or unconsciously, many responses indicated a view of supervision as an occasion where a supervisor, likely the principal or the

assistant principal in a school setting, came into the classroom to observe a teacher in action, taking notes of the observation and then providing some type of feedback to the teacher. In these scenarios, it was largely the lack of presence of a supervisor in the classroom, or the lack of any quality feedback that left an unpalatable and lingering aftertaste for teachers. Principal Adam recalled one of his experiences as a teacher:

> I could have been an axe murderer in the basement of [the school] and no one came in. No one ventured in. No one cared. My diploma exam results were great, so everyone thought you were doing a great job, and because I'd offered to take [low achieving students], people just thanked God that someone did it and it wasn't them! People really didn't know what you were doing. We always talk about teaching being the loneliest profession in the world, and it is. There's no other profession where we say, "Have a great year," for the first two days, and then all hell breaks loose for another 191 [days], and at the end we say, "Boy did we have a good year."

He also highlighted his disillusionment with the minimal number of scheduled, summative supervision experiences conducted to fulfill requirements for continuing contract decisions:

> [The supervisor] would come in to watch your lessons and you were just hoping all hell didn't break loose because you knew if you made it

> through that, you were done. You could have 190 brutal days, but two of them, they had to be shows.

Principal Adam felt strongly about how beginning teachers' attitudes are affected by initial supervisory and evaluative experiences, and about the lack of professional attitude demonstrated by educational personnel who view success in obtaining a continuing contract with a district as "the golden ring, the end goal." He expressed a passionate opinion:

> We screw up in education. We screw up because of the lack of supervision, and the lack of support and the lack of professional development and growth we give to our first year teachers. If we set that pattern then, we don't have to worry about what you and I are talking about now. If you're a lawyer, you article with someone and they keep close tabs on you, and as you grow older in that firm, you are constantly supervised, whether it be by a partner, by a group, whatever, you're constantly evaluated in a variety of different arenas. We don't do that in education; we let you go and if you make it through that first year, we recommend you for that continuous contract and then you're done. I think [supervision of first year teachers] needs to be really intense. I don't think we should apologize [about that].

In a similar context, Teacher Kathy referred to *putting on a show*: "As soon as we find out that an administrator's coming in or a supervisor's coming in to watch you teach, it's a huge panic. And then we create a show." Teacher Beth echoed comments about *putting on a show*:

> [One experience] that our district followed a number of years ago where someone would come in, watch your lesson, take notes, and to me I would think, what a sham because I can put on a good show. I can dream up a lesson, but is that how I am every day? Sure, I can be very impressive, but on a day-to-day list, what are you like? To me, it was very much a kind of orchestrated kind of thing that doesn't give you a real idea of what a person is like on a day-to-day basis. So, that to me was not satisfactory in terms of supervision.

She went on to describe another unsatisfactory supervision experience, echoing Principal Adam's feeling of neglect:

> [Another unsatisfactory supervision experience] was with a principal who was a wonderful person and very supportive and I had no issue with him in terms of being a principal, except I think an issue of neglect. I don't know which is worse, being breathed upon over the shoulder or neglect. I almost think being neglected is worse. Neglect is an issue in itself that is not a very good supervision model.

Teacher Kathy found that she needed to make specific requests to have a principal come in to observe her in action in the classroom, requested when she was "doing something really exciting or special in [her] classroom." Otherwise, principals seldom entered her classroom: "Quite frankly ... [after more than a decade as a teacher] it has been very rare that I have actually had someone [i.e., an administrator] come in and watch me teach."

In his position as principal, Adam committed to regular classroom observations; yet, he found this practice somewhat disillusioning and rather meaningless, as well:

> I would go into class, I'd sit and watch, I'd write some anecdotal notes and then we'd sit down and talk about it. It's the way we were supervised. Someone comes in, sits and watches us and says, "Hey, that's great," and 99% of the time it was the love letter stuff and 1% of the time, someone throws in a tidbit that you either go yeah or nay and no one ever follows it up, or it gets followed up next year.

In discussing colleagues' experiences with supervision as shared with respondents, the context of observations by a supervisor, usually the principal, was repeated. A number of responses indicated a general feeling of dissatisfaction with this practice or a lack of experience with this practice. As Principal Adam noted, "It's a double-edged sword. I don't think people feel comfortable being supervised, but that doesn't mean they don't want it, it's

because it hasn't been a practice." Teacher Kathy suggested that her colleagues felt intimidated in being observed by a supervisor in the classroom as part of accepted supervision practice in their school site:

> They hate it. They'd rather it not happen. They're very intimidated. Teachers are totally intimidated by adults. They're fine when the door is closed and they've got kids, but as soon as other adults show up, I'm sure a lot of teachers feel [intimidated].

As respondents delved into reasons for their colleagues' negative perceptions about supervision, it became evident that the negativity may not be as pervasive as initially thought. Some responses acknowledged colleagues' satisfaction with the supervision they receive, although some responses qualified this satisfaction by relating it to specific groups of teachers or by indicating specific reasons. Teacher Beth sensed that teachers who realize that they are not meeting the Teaching Quality Standard are the teachers that would feel less positive about supervision practices, such as being observed in the classroom. She laughingly suggested, "If you don't have a lot of initiative, if you don't want to work that hard, then you better be under a different model [of supervision practice than one that includes classroom observation]." Nonetheless, her opinion is that many teachers do want to be supervised. She links her opinion to earlier expressed thoughts on accountability:

> I think there is a large group that does [want to be supervised], but I don't think everybody necessarily believes that. I think there are a number of people that think they can do it on their own and don't need the accountability. But, I think you stray when you do that. It doesn't work. I think the majority would agree. On the one hand, you might grouch about certain kinds of supervision that seem to be things you don't seem to think you need. On the other hand, they would be quick to admit that, "Oh, if someone didn't tell me to get those long-range plans in, I probably wouldn't do them, and I probably wouldn't get them in.

Principal Adam shared a different viewpoint, suggesting that many teachers appear satisfied with supervision that demands little from them:

> I think the majority [of teachers] are happy with the supervision they receive, but they're happy for the wrong reasons. They're happy because it's non-intrusive, they're happy because it's non-confrontational and it's easy. Someone [i.e., principal, assistant principal, or department head] comes in and says hi, checks things out, sits for a half hour, [and] unless something tragic went on, a love letter gets written, goes in your file and everyone's happy for another couple of years, depending. So, many are happy with that.

Teacher Kathy expressed a parallel view in discussing what she felt was a reason for most teachers being satisfied with the supervision they received:

> Most of them have the attitude that they're quite happy and content with what they're doing, and they just want to have a checklist of, this is what I have to do, and do their little checklist, and then go home at the end of the day and it's a done deal.

Some respondents were more encouraging about why some teachers felt more positive about supervision they received. Principal Natasha felt confident that the majority of teachers value supervision:

> I think the majority want that [supervision] because the competent individuals, the secure, good teachers, want supervision, want honest, up-front supervision. The teachers who are not as confident, maybe not as capable, perhaps want less supervision, and that makes sense as well. That's human nature. But those, of course, are the ones you really need to step to the fore. When I think of the staff at my school, the ones that are really secure and are very demonstrative of an excellent skill set, have the right attitude, have the right broad-based knowledge base, all those sorts of things, those are the ones who are most willing, most secure, the most open to supervision. I think it's the really excellent teachers who are the most willing, open and wanting [of] that sort of supervision.

A commitment to excellence as a teacher is a quality that Principal Jan believes helps teachers to feel positive about being supervised:

> I believe that any person who truly looks at education as a commitment and a passion in their own life, and is committed to excellence, wants to be supervised and is not afraid of supervision. I believe supervision becomes an issue for many teachers if they are unwilling, not necessarily unable. I think if you are competent, or if you are willing to become competent, then supervision is not an issue. [The best supervision] comes from the internal values of a teacher. Someone who has that intrinsic value to always search for excellence, always wanting to be better, is critical of themselves, and not critical in a negative way, but in a way that they are always doing a 360 degree [i.e., gathering feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders and through various means].

A link between supervision and evaluation continues to be held, to varying degrees and with varied opinions, by educators. Provincial and school district policies, and provincial teachers' association policy, include evaluation with supervision under the umbrella of staff performance. In provincial and teachers' association policy statements, evaluation and supervision are linked as a commonly used phrase, "supervision and evaluation." For many educational personnel, supervision and evaluation were experienced as part of the same process during phases of their careers (i.e., bureaucratic functions for ensuring minimal standards are met, not supervision by trusted colleagues for the purpose

of professional growth), and this connection appears to influence perceptions of supervision in their current reality. In considering the supervision process, Principal Adam acknowledged that principals,

> for the most part, supervise the way that [they] were supervised, so unless someone comes along and says, "No don't do that, do it this way or try this," we won't break out of that mould. It's an old, old, old model [i.e., his familiar supervision process] and I don't think it's appropriate anymore.

Yet, as a teacher and as a principal, Adam continues to link evaluation very closely to the supervision process:

> I'm one who doesn't believe they [i.e., supervision and evaluation] can be differentiated, because if I tell you something, I'm making an evaluation. It's good or it's bad. You should try it or you should stop. Do this or do that. You're making an evaluation on the practice that you've observed. I think for any professional practice, and I don't care whether you're a teacher, or a professional athlete, or a pro musician, where we become good is when we know we're being supervised and evaluated and judged against some standard, whatever that standard may be. I believe it's crucial for that supervision to take place, not because we have to watch out for the good or bad teachers, but unless there's some type of formal evaluation that is based on the practices that someone

> observes, we will not become any better. We will continue to do what we have done.

Teacher Kathy referred to her sense that some teachers found the presence of the principal in the classroom intimidating, a feeling that, "Oh, my God, he's evaluating me!" Teacher Kathy expressed similar beliefs as did Principal Adam, and used supervision and evaluation almost interchangeably in her response:

> Whether or not we think we're evaluating or not, we always are. There's no such thing as coming in [i.e., visit to the classroom] and not evaluating you or assessing how you're doing. Maybe it's not with pen and paper, but it's certainly a mental note. People on a job get evaluated, their performance gets evaluated all the time, so what's the difference with teachers? I don't think there's any way around it. This is something we should be doing all the time because we need to keep improving. ... But, if we're being supervised, we all [i.e., the teacher and the supervisor] need to know what we're being supervised on and we all need to have the information, the literature and the material available to make sure we've done our homework, and I guess you'd need to have sort of like a checklist. If you're coming in to evaluate me on classroom management, then I need to know that's what is going to happen and what will be the focus. ... It happens all the time. Once you start focusing on something, it's bound to get better. But, there has to be some

> inservices that would occur prior to that time, to that meeting, so people are actually rehearsed and know what it is they're going to be evaluated on.

Teacher Kathy believed that in addition to the principal, all teachers need to be supervisors, and that "we all need to learn how to evaluate one another and how to praise one another," again meshing supervision with evaluation and reinforcing a critical aspect to evaluation. Principal Natasha noted that feeling evaluated versus feeling supervised created a different impression for the teacher being observed:

> I think that teachers recognize that principals are supervisors, and all that isn't negative. Evaluation is a little deeper [than supervision], and evaluation has negative connotations, sometimes, and especially for teaching personnel. But, if teachers see you as evaluating the work that they are doing, if they see you more as walking in front of them rather than beside them, it has a negative kind of connotation for them. It's human nature. When I'm being evaluated by [my supervisor], I'm more nervous, for whatever reason, there's pressures on me that I don't sense if [the supervisor] is simply supervising me. So, in my evaluative years, for whatever reason, the bar, in my mind, is raised a bit. Let's face it, if you have a teacher that needs to be evaluated over a teacher that needs to

> be supervised, they certainly feel more pressure. If I was feeling evaluated I may feel less supported, that's just the way it goes.

Principal Natasha sensed that in her school, at least, there has been a shift toward more positive teacher perceptions of supervision, possibly because there is minimal emphasis on an evaluative component or because the term, evaluation, has been separated from the supervision process in the general school context.

Embedded in discussion about perceptions of the supervision process, some of the respondents commented on whether the same process should be used with all teachers and across all school sites. As might be expected, opposing views emerged, with two of three responses supporting a common supervision model for all teachers. As noted earlier, supervision and evaluation are sometimes used interchangeably, or as components of a single process.

> I think there should be lots of commonality. [The supervision process] has to be a common one. We have to be evaluated on the same thing. We have to know what it is that we're being evaluated on. We have to make the playing field fair and even. ... There has to be some sort of common evaluation, as we have with kids writing exams, it's the same kind of thing. We need to know every kid is writing the same exam, is being taught the same curriculum at the same time, and we had all better be on board and have these kids up to par and be able to meet those

> expectations. I don't see us as teachers being any different. (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School)

Principal Adam was initially unsure of his beliefs about the wisdom of a common supervision process for all teachers in all school sites, but his response indicated strong support for common supervision practices that teachers would come to accept, be comfortable with, and expect:

> I'm almost convinced that the same practices, the same things we want to evaluate, the same things we want staff to improve, are no different from the first year to the thirtieth year. The difference is in the refinement of the practice. I think that if we set whatever process we're going to use as the process in the first year and we continue that, there's no surprises. People become accustomed to how they're going to be evaluated, how [we're] going to work with them professionally, what's to be expected, and it takes a lot of that fear out of the process and a lot of the apprehension. [Current practice,] where we do it once every three years and it's a shot in the dark and it's a couple observations, and instead of people looking forward to the professional development that should take place, they dread it. ... The professional growth plan, that whole thing, I just don't think it's appropriate.

He did qualify his beliefs by identifying one exception to having a common supervision process for all teachers, that being with teachers who are deemed to

be in difficulty. Principal Adam suggested that supervision for these teachers is "a whole different process."

Holding a different view, Principal Natasha expressed adamant beliefs that the supervision process must be individualized to meet individual teacher needs:

> I think that, like children in classrooms, it has to be sort of individual. It has to be individual because we have some teachers who request more supervision than others, some teachers who need more supervision than others, and some teachers who need evaluative, almost disciplinary action, to ensure safety and well-being of students. ... Should all professionals, teachers [experience a common supervision process]? No, absolutely not. You need to bump it up in certain cases. Some teachers request more supervision; the [process promoted through a current district initiative] model really speaks to that in terms of teachers saying, "I need you to come into my classroom and look specifically at this, come and help me with this," so that that supervision becomes more a coaching. But, should all teachers get the same amount, the same model? No.

Supervision Practice: Factors Impacting Continuous, Self-directed, Professional Growth and Quality Performance

Organizational culture. Respondents were asked to discuss how provincial and district policies and practices influenced supervision practices in their school setting, and what impact these policies and practices had on their own and their colleagues' professional growth and performance. Few respondents indicated a sense of confident knowledge of provincial Policy 2.1.5 on Teacher Growth, Supervision, and Evaluation, or of Ministerial Order #016/97 in setting out the approved Teaching Quality Standard (TQS). Teacher respondents, in particular, appeared to have minimal awareness of provincial policy, although they were aware that teaching standards existed and that teachers are required to prepare an annual professional growth plan. References to teaching quality standards and to professional growth plans were generally made in a school district context, with perceptions that these mandates are derived from school district policies, or that provincial and district policies are one in the same. Some expressed confusion and frustration with their admitted lack of knowledge about provincial and district policy. Teacher Kathy expressed,

> I don't understand how it's supposed to work. I've heard about it [provincial and district policies], but I have not seen it. ... Once it

> [requirement for regular evaluation] was taken out, does this mean I'm not accountable any more? ... How could this happen?

She did refer to the TQS (Teaching Quality Standard), but admitted that she had almost no recollection of what the document contained.

> The last time I looked at that was when I was in university [more than a decade ago]. Can you imagine? It's embarrassing for me to say that. That would be the last time that I looked at them. I remember it at one time. (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School)

Although school principal respondents appeared somewhat more aware of provincial policy documents, they generally made little reference to these in their discussion. They also focused on district policy and practices in their responses. The process of determining and approving educational policy at the provincial and at the school district levels did not appear to be clearly understood by most respondents, as might be discerned from references to policy decisions attributed solely to the Superintendent of Schools. For example, one teacher expressed disagreement with the Superintendent's decision to remove the requirement for regular teacher evaluations, and one principal disagreed with the Superintendent's decision to remove the requirement for principals to prepare reflective letters for teachers on a three-year cycle. Despite a general lack of clear understanding of policy, some components of provincial and district policies were nonetheless identified as positive influences on

organizational culture and on supervision practices at the school level. The Teaching Quality Standard provision was noted to be helpful to principals, as Principal Jan explained:

> I think in terms of supervision that it [i.e., TQS document] helps us to define what is competency in a classroom and what is not. I think there are indicators there, all written out. It's concrete. Everyone can go to it, it's consistent in a school, [and] teachers know the indicators that are there for everyone. I'm really pleased with that document that Alberta Learning has developed for us because it really helps teachers to measure their own performance.

Principal Adam suggested that the strength of current policy is

> it allows professionals to be professionals, or it allows them to feel that way, that once you become a certificated teacher, we will let you teach and we're not going to bother you with this reflective letter, this and that, unless you request it or unless it changes.

A reference to policy as *that kind of game* (Principal Adam, Pine Valley School), is a turn of phrase that cannot be ignored, however, in considering how some professionals feel about the impact of policy on supervision practice at the school level.

A provincially mandated curriculum is a component of policy that is a positive influence on school culture and supervision practice. Principal Natasha

felt that having *a very structured curriculum* is very supportive of her supervision practice, and of quality teacher performance:

> [A very structured curriculum] makes my job easier and I think it holds us more accountable, [and it] sets the high expectations. I think that is what we do as principals in our schools, as teachers in our classrooms, as parents. We set those expectations high [and provincial] policies help.

A district initiative that encourages instructional leadership of principals and that asks principals to provide support for teaching and learning by being in classrooms for at least half of their administrative time was seen by several respondents as a positive cultural influence for teacher professional growth and quality performance, and as a positive supervisory practice. Principal Adam felt that increased principal time in the classroom enhanced supervision, albeit at a most basic level:

> I think that if no other practice apart from putting a warm body in a classroom with another teacher so they feel that they're being supervised, whether you do anything apart from breathe in that room, I think that ups the ante. I think it's a noble thing for the district to do.

Because of the district initiative to have principals increase time in classrooms, Teacher Beth "... noticed a huge difference in how the principal spends the

majority of her time. ... It gives the principal a really good idea [of the teaching and learning that is happening in each classroom]."

Other components of the district initiative, such as the strong emphasis on a school-wide instructional focus, and on research, professional development, quality teaching practices, and achievement target setting that involves the principal in collegial work with teachers, was noted by some respondents as having a positive impact on school and district cultures. Principal Jan pointed out that there is "a nice tone in [the] district, the tone that there's policy, but there's also good practice. We used to talk about policy all the time, and it wasn't what was best for kids." She admitted that policy did not drive her practice, believing that she would

> just get my fingers rapped when I go wrong. I'm doing what I feel is right and beg forgiveness if it's wrong. I don't really even look at the policies. I give a lot of thought to what's good practice for our school. ... We're getting some results.

Principal Natasha found the district initiative to be "a huge opportunity and an excellent example of walking beside staff," something she considered integral in her supervision practice. She also appreciated that the district sets clear expectations, placing student achievement "in the fore, and that really makes my job easier as [a] supervisor." Principal Jan noted:

> We've [principals] moved to a different ground where we're doing more collaboration and observation in classrooms, so people are having another opportunity to share what professional development they were involved in to help them develop a skill. We're doing more teaming in terms of professional development across schools and that's been really good, as well. That kind of helps to change and set the culture. ... We're very fortunate in our district that we put dollars to professional development. Giving us the resources, setting up short-term leadership P.D. (Professional Development), honouring sabbaticals, all those things tell you that you're in a culture that values P.D.

Teacher Martin expressed some frustration with the district initiative, however, and with the impact of increasing expectations on the district's culture, on a school's culture, and on teachers:

> It's being rammed down our throats. A lot of people see the usefulness of it ... we do have to change, but [there needs to be] balance. ... It makes it difficult for the teachers and it makes it difficult for their supervisors.

Principal respondents acknowledged that not all staff accepted the high expectations of the district initiative and its impact on schools and teachers entirely willingly; yet, as Principal Jan reflected, "Change takes time, so we have to be patient in terms of that."

Other factors that are seen as positive influences of school and district culture on supervision practice, more directly related to staff performance and motivation for continuous improvement, are an openness of communication across the district, and the sense that the Superintendent of Schools listens, hears, and values input from teachers and other staff. One teacher respondent felt privileged to be part of a formal teacher advisory group that met regularly with the Superintendent, and felt that she could communicate any issue directly to the Superintendent and have her views taken seriously. In her opinion, "We have a unique model ... our district has such a good model for input. I've sat around [the] table with the Superintendent and other senior district administrators, and you talk to the Superintendent ... and you tell him what teachers are saying" (Teacher Beth, Eastridge School). Teacher Martin also expressed appreciation for the way the district makes the effort to seek teacher input, and to include teachers in decision-making and as problem-solvers in teaching related issues. He believes that the high level of teacher involvement "gives teachers a lot of confidence and it says to us, "I have faith in you," and that's a nice pat on the back." Teachers who feel that their work and expertise are valued are encouraged to enhance their expertise and to continually strive for improved performance, qualities that support the supervision process.

Specific to district policy, two principals appreciated that the policy on staff performance was open-ended enough to allow principals to make decisions

about how supervision could best be carried out in their individual schools. Although admitting concern that some principals may take advantage of the option of whether to prepare regular reflective letters for teachers, Principal Natasha appreciated having the choice, and she tried "to encourage staff to recognize the value in [reflective letters] because it's positive for them, it's positive for me."

> I think when you close a door or you make things rigid, or you make a proclamation, it doesn't happen. You have to foster it from a natural, normal aspect that this is what is good practice and then allow people to share how that practice looks in that school. I'll sit down and read about it [policy], and look at my model and see how it best fits. ... It allows me to bring out my skill set that is necessary for improvement in this school. (Principal Jan, Mason Ridge School)

Teacher Beth, however, would prefer that district policy provided for a more structured approach to supervision practice: "You need to have conformity within a district. ... Mobility would be very difficult if there were a lot of different kinds of ways that supervision were carried out." On the option of whether principals would prepare reflective letters, Teacher Beth commented, "I've talked to other teachers in other schools that have said [they would] give anything if somebody would write [them] a reflective letter." As with almost all other issues related to supervision, a range of views exists, and different

perspectives on the impact of district policy on school culture and practice need to be considered.

Some respondents did express concern with provincial and district policies related to teacher supervision and to staff performance. Marginal or poor performing teachers are an issue that some respondents expressed concern about; they felt that policy was not strong enough in providing avenues for dealing effectively with these teachers.

> There are some very nice people who are teachers, who aren't good teachers, who maybe just don't get it in terms of what we need to do. ... [There are] professional growth plans and then there's the evaluation model, and then there's that no man's land in between where [some] staff fit in to. They're [i.e., the teachers 'in between'] not initiating what they need to be, but they don't fit into an evaluation. I don't know whether that can be addressed in the model that we work with, the staff that consistently don't fit in. (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School)

In Teacher Beth's opinion, policies on supervision and staff performance need to have "more teeth. ... There needs to be some vehicle whereby you are able to say goodbye, you're doing more harm than good to kids." She believed that her frustration with this issue is shared by many colleagues and by principals.

> I personally feel very sad when there are teachers who should not be in the system. I think that's where it's really necessary to have the kind of

> supervision that allows you to not shuttle them around, but get them doing something that's outside of working with children. It's important and we've all been in circumstances where we see this person shouldn't be in a classroom, and so, it's a little bit of a Catch 22, right now the way the system works, because outside of some gross misdemeanour you cannot move those people out from under the educational roof. ... There's some [teachers] whose energy is in trying to beat the system, rather than accept the accountability and accept coaching and whatever. ... I'm glad to see the evaluation process in place. It still doesn't address the issue of how to start it. That's a hard one. If someone just doesn't belong here and they haven't committed a crime or something, how do you get them out, because it's not fair, it's not fair to kids because this is a really important job. ... There's not many of them, but there's no way. They just get recycled and reshuffled, and that's not fair. (Teacher Beth, Eastridge School)

Principal Adam expressed the argument of differentiating teachers from another perspective, recognizing that there are teachers who stand out as professionals:

> I know it's a dirty word, and it's a dirty word with the Union [i.e., Teachers' Association], but I think we have to look at the concept of Master Teachers. We truly do have teachers out there who are exemplary, that have exemplary practices and why do we hide them,

> why do we play this game where everyone is equal? We know that is not true. I think we have those people that we should designate [as Master Teacher], and I don't care if it's a gold medal around the neck or we're giving them more money every month, I think we have to look at that.

For some respondents, an issue of concern with provincial policy appears to be the seriousness with which teachers accept responsibility for their professional growth plan. A lack of consistency in how staff members in various school sites work with their professional growth plans was evident. Some respondents described what they found to be effective and meaningful processes in place to help to ensure a degree of accountability, measurable results, and reflective practice, but in other schools, teacher professional growth plans were viewed as less meaningful. Teacher Kathy would have appreciated a higher level of administrator interest and involvement in her growth plan; as it was, she found the process "a waste of time, a futile exercise." Overall, a number of underlying factors appeared to contribute to the quality and success of teacher professional growth plans; these factors were discussed by respondents in the course of dialogue on supervision, professional growth, and performance, and are included later in this chapter.

Respondents were asked to discuss how their school's organizational culture influenced supervision practices in their school setting, and what impact

their school culture had on their own and their colleagues' professional growth and performance. Facilitating access to professional development experiences appeared to be a high priority for some principals within their supervision practice. Principal Jan "used professional development to shape the culture of the school," and she explained that at her school, participation in professional development is an expectation, guided by teacher interests, and by teacher professional growth plans that are targeted to improving student achievement and that are driven by student results. Principal Jan found that she could not

> keep up with the number of professional activities that people want to be involved in, because it's just the culture that's valued [at my school] and there's dollars put towards it. ... I think that professional development always needs to be opening doors for people, [facilitating] opportunities [for staff] to bring and build initiatives [at the school level] ... and allowing that to be the ruling environment in your school.

Ensuring that time and financial support are given to supporting teacher growth is important to Principal Adam, as well. Principal Jan judged the quality of her supervision practice through the professional growth of teachers. She firmly believed that "to improve the performance of the entire school, I have to raise the performance of every teacher in the school." Similarly highlighting professional development experiences as a component of the school's culture and of her supervision practice, Principal Natasha expressed value for the work

she did with her staff as "a collaborative learning organization." In some schools, the principal placed strong emphasis on continual professional improvement and on reflective opportunities, and held the belief that staff may be stimulated to learn more and become better at their craft if they were surrounded "with a richness of literature that values what they do" (Principal Jan, Mason Ridge School). Teacher Kathy reinforced the value of having the principal encourage professional reading as part of the school's professional culture, and appreciated receiving articles and e-mail updates that suggested helpful web sites, noting that this kind of information "improves my teaching." Principal Adam recognized recent improvement in the value that teachers and principals placed on collegial supervision, and on collaborative and reflective practices in conjunction with professional development work; he felt that these improvements might be attributed to a district priority initiative that promotes these types of practices.

Respondents frequently referred to professional attitudes and relationships when discussing the influence of a school's culture and practices on supervision, and on teacher growth and performance. Some respondents indicated that professional relationships built on trust, compassion, and caring as the basis for school culture were desirable factors. Upholding these qualities helps to create a safe and non-threatening atmosphere, a factor that Principal Jan believes serves to strengthen the supervision process. Relationships that value a

high degree of integrity and collaborative work in a shared leadership environment were also viewed as desirable qualities in the school setting. It was evident that teachers value honest feedback from colleagues in relation to professional growth needs and plans; Teacher Martin believed he was very helpful to colleagues in that respect. The quality of honesty extends to include holding colleagues accountable. Teacher Beth described "side-by-side" supervision as preferable to "top-down" supervision, where the school culture supports staff, alongside the supervisor, in confronting negativity of colleagues and in holding each other accountable for their performance. Ongoing monitoring that is an accepted part of a school culture helps a staff "improve what we do. They're all stronger for it and I know I'm stronger for it" (Principal Jan, Mason Ridge School). Honest and open communication can be a challenge, more so in large school sites, as Teacher Martin cautioned, where there is increased danger of "one way flow from administration to [staff]. ... Communication is a two-way street and we've got to make sure both streets are open." Principal Natasha acknowledged that ideally, small school sites facilitate regular professional conversations among staff members, including the principal, and that these sites allow a wider base of knowledge of what happens in each classroom, largely because the principal can visit classrooms more frequently.

At the most basic level, a school culture that values supervision, and that supports quality teacher performance and continuing professional growth, reveals a staff group that embraces high expectations and strong professional commitment. A culture of excellence and a collective desire for continuous improvement exists. Teacher Beth expressed her belief that a school culture of this nature possesses the unspoken expectation "that when you do what's best for kids, it doesn't quit at 3:45 [p.m.]." She described her worst career experience as working in

> an atmosphere of neglect, it just pulls everything down and that translates to the classroom where there's kind of a cloud. You're just doing your job. It isn't vibrant and on the edge, and it not an exciting place to be, a little bit drudgery, I think. (Teacher Beth, Eastridge School)

Principal Adam expressed frustration with somewhat apathetic professional attitudes that find no need to improve practice when student achievement results are very positive; he observed that on his staff, "20% of my staff are involved in something that you go, holy smokes, that's good." In his opinion, teachers in some schools (i.e., schools serving high socio-economic families) would have difficulty demonstrating success in schools that served challenging students in challenging neighbourhoods; yet, these teachers saw no need to question or to change what they were doing with students. School culture, then, plays an

important role in teacher attitudes and expectations of themselves as professionals in planning for challenging and meaningful professional growth. Teacher Kathy cited a school district initiative that requires schools to develop a common instructional focus, and to link all that happens in the school to that focus, as a promising and desirable quality in the school culture: "Everybody's on the same page at the same time, and we're learning the same strategies, and we're all working on those strategies, and they're all visible." Common goals and professional growth opportunities support an open-door policy, where teachers feel welcome in each other's classrooms to observe colleagues in action, and where they feel comfortable in offering critique and in sharing in reflection of each other's practice (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School). Tied to this type of culture are the qualities of professional relationships that allow for mutual respect and trust, and for collegial support. As Teacher Kathy commented, "We all have good days and bad days."

School environment is an influencing factor in supervision practice, professional growth, and staff performance. Principal Jan noted that "any environment that is dictatorial, an autocratic type of leadership style, does not nurture professional development [and creates] a stifling environment." A positive and encouraging environment that provides opportunities for creative problem solving that recognize and take advantage of teacher expertise is

empowering to teachers, and encourages teachers to be "interpreneurial [sic] and entrepreneurial" (Teacher Martin, Mountain Crest School).

The organizational culture of the respective school appears to influence supervision practice, professional growth, and staff performance more strongly than do provincial or school district policies and practices. Within the school culture, staff member attitudes create an umbrella that provides direction for other factors that drive individual and collective desires for continuous improvement and for excellence in performance.

Teacher attitudes, skills, and behaviours. Teacher attitudes, and their professional skills and behaviours, emerged as important influences on supervision practices in the school context, and on continuous, self-directed professional growth and performance. Respondents consistently referred to teacher attitudes and perceptions about their responsibilities as professionals, citing skills and behaviours that supported or impeded desired outcomes of supervision, professional growth, and performance. There appeared to be general acceptance that teacher attitudes as professionals, regardless of context, are largely responsible for satisfaction and success in professional growth experiences, in consistent quality performance, and in the nature of perceptions of the supervision process. All respondents identified positive teacher attitudes, and self-motivation, self-monitoring, critical self-analysis, and reflective practice as essential teacher skills and behaviours. In discussing motivation,

Principal Jan found that "people who [have] a value system or excellence somewhere in their lives" are the teachers who demonstrate self-motivation in continuous professional growth and in consistent, quality performance in the classroom. She noted that teachers who were internally motivated were the ones who committed to active participation in professional development activities to improve themselves. Principal Natasha considered the level of happiness of teachers who do not sense and gain rewards intrinsically, suggesting that these individuals needed to ask themselves why and then do something about it if they were not happy in their work. Unhappiness that extends to discouraging and negative attitudes has an impact on the school culture and on attitudes of colleagues.

> I'm a very optimistic person, but I've seen a lot of people where that [i.e., negative attitudes of colleagues] kills them, and it's so sad because they've got such lively minds. We see them deadened by people who are so discouraging and negative. (Teacher Martin, Mountain Crest School)

Teacher Beth observed, "Pockets of negativism [are] degenerative and they take you off track in terms of what you're here for, and it's difficult as a staff. It just makes a difficult job more difficult."

Extrinsic motivation, including recognition from the principal, is needed by some teachers, even when they profess intrinsic motivation.

> I have a fire burning, and I'm pretty good at keeping it lit and going by myself, but it's nice to have stimula [sic] from other people to keep you going and to keep you motivated. When that doesn't happen, especially from the administrator, then you're thinking, "Why am I doing this? Why am I here?" We're supposed to be in this together and we're not sharing. It makes it very difficult. (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School)

Principal Adam expressed a degree of frustration in his experiences at the post-elementary levels with teachers who appeared to lack motivation:

> You'd be lucky if you had one-third of your staff that are really highly motivated, highly professional, highly involved in professional development. It doesn't mean that the other two-thirds are poor teachers, it just means that whatever is happening in their lives, they aren't part of that one-third, unless we push them and put the pressure on them. It's scary when you think of it.

Several respondents expressed concern about the lack of motivation of some teachers. Teachers who remained in the same school, often in the same position, for many years are more likely to be viewed as teachers in danger of becoming stagnant: "They retired on the job; they just didn't let anybody know" (Principal Jan, Mason Ridge School). Younger teachers, too, sometimes exude an impression of lacking motivation and of work ethics that are less than what some respondents view as professional. Teacher Beth expressed disappointment

in recent experiences with some student teachers: "It's beyond inexperience ... the unwillingness to be able to dig in there and do what you need to do. Work ethic. It's like a lark." Whether teacher performance suffers because of lack of motivation or a less than ambitious work ethic, or of defensive undermining of increasing expectations in working towards continual improvement, supervisors and colleagues feel disillusioned and frustrated.

> Lack of confidence, wanting to be isolated, lack of ability ... I don't know, but I think at any given time, a third of our staff is in real trouble. When you walk into classes and you see some things going on, and you just grind your molars, it can be like that. It's not that they're bad teachers, it's just that things just aren't going well, or they're not planned or prepared, or something in their life has collapsed, but many people just like to close the door, because they know, deep down inside, that the job that they're doing is not appropriate. We know that happens all the time, everyday, in all of our [schools]. It doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter what we think. You may get the dog and pony show when you're in there, and the lights and the bells and the whistles, but then the kids will come and say, "I don't want to go to that class anymore." And you go, "Why? I was in that classroom and it was great," and they give you the look like, come on, that was the show. (Principal Adam, Pine Valley School)

All respondents suggested that responsibility for setting challenging growth goals and accountability for achieving desired results lies with teachers, and that these tasks need to be accepted willingly by teachers, individually and collectively, as part of the supervision process. In working with teachers, Principal Adam found that some did not respond well to accountability expectations within the supervision process: "Some [teachers] are like porcupines, there's just no way you're going to break through, and it's going to be a struggle, and you'll get every excuse in the world." Teachers who accept responsibility for quality performance may feel somewhat resentful of any supervision practice that appears to be an overseeing of performance. Teacher Kathy believes that she is "a very responsible teacher. If I say I'm going to do something, I will do it and I will do it well, and you don't need to look over my shoulder to make sure I'm doing that." Nonetheless, she acknowledges that accountability is important and that the principal needs to know that all the right things are happening in the classroom. Teacher Martin suggested that teachers with "horrible attitudes" were possibly reacting defensively against the prevailing climate of educational change that touched every aspect of their school and professional lives, and he felt that these teachers just had "to get over that attitude."

Principal Natasha appreciated teachers who were most open to supervision practices, finding these teachers "are the ones that are really secure and are very demonstrative of an excellent skill set, have the right attitude, [and] have the right broad-based knowledge base." Similarly, Teacher Beth expressed the belief that teachers do want to be held accountable: "You want somebody to notice and take note ... and if we have self-esteem and self-respect, we honestly do want somebody to call us to task if things aren't the way they should be. You know deep down that they're not."

Knowledge of and commitment to the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) were also highlighted as essential skills and behaviours for teachers. Teacher Beth referred regularly to the TQS each year, using the document as an anchor in her ongoing reflective practice: "The TQS helps teachers monitor their performance. It marks [their] strengths." Focused and ongoing attention to quality of performance is an important teacher behaviour. Principal Jan's unrelenting emphasis on teacher growth rises from her belief that "as teachers, our weakest link is really our level of performance." The TQS alone, however, does not provide teachers with comprehensive information on their performance or on their professional growth needs; teachers need to gather information from a variety of sources and in a variety of ways in an attempt to analyze their performance critically and honestly.

> My performance, individually, the kids tell me. You know when you haven't done a good job, they know. You look around the classroom and you see blank faces. It's easy to blame the kids and say they haven't done a good job, but you know who, really, to point the finger at. Look at yourself first. It's a very difficult task for a person to bring out their strengths and weaknesses. Let's face it, [we] don't like to talk about our weaknesses, do we now? (Teacher Martin, Mountain Crest School)

Teacher Beth echoed this manner of critical self-analysis: "The biggest indicator of my performance [is] when I look out at their [i.e., students'] sea of faces, it really bothers me when they're blank. If they're not engaged, I need to not wait to reflect." Inviting and accepting feedback from other sources is important, too, along with other self-monitoring strategies.

> Feedback from parents, feedback from other teachers, feedback from kids ... monitoring my own performance, going back to my long-range plans, going back to my curriculum, [but] I think that they're [i.e., students] my best source [for feedback]. ... What I like to do with kids is check back with them and say, "Is this helping? Is this working? Would there be a better way?" They're honest. It's really important. (Teacher Beth, Eastridge School)

Teacher Kathy also looks to students to help her to determine the level of her performance: "The results of students, and obviously dialogue and

communication with the kids and the parents ... you can tell if the kids want to be in your classroom or not. By the same token, you know when it's (i.e., a lesson) a bad one." Not all days can be perfect, though, and teachers need to give themselves permission to acknowledge this, despite trying their best. "I know there are some days, if I can just make it through the day, blank [students] or not, that's my best for that day" (Teacher Beth, Eastridge School). Critical self-analysis and reflection are crucial activities for teachers when lessons are not as successful as they need to be.

> I'm the first one to admit [that] I fail sometimes, and what do I do when I fail? I go back to my lesson plans. What did I not do well? You've got to be so self-critical. What did I do wrong? What could I have done better? (Teacher Martin, Mountain Crest School)

Teachers need to have the confidence to acknowledge areas for growth, and to be willing to request support and assistance as part of the supervision process. Unfortunately, as Principal Adam has experienced, "For the most part, many [teachers] are still reluctant to ask for help. Many still won't."

Data gathered through the reflective process are invaluable to professional growth. Principal Natasha used performance data of students, their achievement results, as "sign posts that tell us where we need to go with kids. ... How can we not look at that for ourselves, as well?"

> We have to be critical, and we have to be reflective, and we have to look back in order to look forward. ... Key for me and key for all teachers, is the whole [process of] critical self-awareness, or self-appraisal or self-reflection. I think that that's really the key in terms of personal growth. You can be telling somebody that they're good at something or not so good at something, and that may be lost in the long run. But, if you, as an individual, recognize [a] need to grow in this area or look back at what worked and [what] didn't, that this is the area I need to concentrate on. That's truly where growth starts. (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School)

Meaningful and challenging professional growth plans, positive attitudes toward professional development, and intrinsic motivation for continuous improvement and excellence are skills and behaviours that encourage teachers to seek quality professional development experiences. "The best professional development comes from the people who buy into the value and it comes from within" (Principal Jan, Mason Ridge School). When considering goals for their professional growth plans, several respondents suggested that teachers needed to have control over the direction of their plans. Principal Natasha believes that primarily, teachers need to select growth goals that they "personally are passionate about," without restricting themselves to school-wide goals. Teacher control of their professional growth plans increases the likelihood that

meaningful growth will occur. Teachers who have ownership of their goals and who accept responsibility for achieving results are believed to take their plans more seriously.

> I really take those things [i.e., setting goals] seriously because if you're going to set a goal, you make sure you shoot for that goal. Otherwise, it's just paperwork, takes up my time, why would we do it? If they [i.e., professional growth plans] just get shelved, then what's the point? (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School)

There is a need, too, for teachers to commit to continuous learning throughout their careers. Principal Jan suggested that regardless of many years of experience, teachers' skill sets needed to evolve in relation to changing needs of students and curriculum.

> If we want students to be good learners, we at the school must model [those] ourselves. It's part of a cycle of growth, support, and identifying the new strategies that we need for our students, [and we need to] make sure that we're current in terms of our skill level. (Principal Jan, Mason Ridge School)

There are teachers who may balk at professional development activities; some senior teachers may feel that they have been through it all before and that

they have learned all there is to learn (Teacher Martin, Mountain Crest School), while some teachers "may not want the work involved" (Principal Jan, Mason Ridge School). Principal Adam related an alternative observation about teachers who independently seek professional growth experiences and those who do not:

> Good teachers have a tendency to involve themselves in professional development, involve themselves in reading, involve themselves in reflective practice, involve themselves with kids, [and] involve themselves in a variety of different things. Teachers that aren't very strong teachers [do not] have a tendency to involve themselves in all of that because, typically, they get overwhelmed with just the day-to-day stuff of getting things marked, getting assignments out, creating lesson plans, and doing all of that, so they have a real difficulty with that chunk.

Principal attitudes, skills, and behaviours. Closely linked to teacher attitudes, and professional skills and behaviours, supervisor [i.e., principal] attitudes, and their professional skills and behaviours emerged as equally important influences on supervision practices in the school context, and on professional growth and performance of teachers. A number of professional skills, behaviours, and attitudes were highlighted by respondents, with many of these alluding to the principal's credibility and personal presence as an inspiring leader, qualities that respondents considered strong influences on professional

growth and performance, and on positive attitudes about supervision. Principal Adam expressed appreciation for the personal qualities of a former supervisor, believing that it was this supervisor's charisma and natural presence that helped to inspire others toward higher achievement, in part because there was "no mistake who was driving the bus." A principal's personality has a degree of influence on how staff members respond to them. Teacher Kathy felt that the personality of the principal makes a difference in how the individual is received by staff members: "It really depends on the person, personality is a huge thing," but she declined further discussion to provide an indication of what personality traits are most desirable. Having a natural presence or a charisma that draws people may be a key ingredient in influencing staff. Principal Adam noted supervisor effectiveness in a range of personalities: some supervisors are informal and easy-going, others are "informal in some aspects, incredibly formal in others."

It became evident through many responses that principals need to have a strong sense of direction, a vision, of what needs to be achieved, and that they possess the leadership skills to guide and support staff in achieving that vision.

> Key for me [in leadership qualities] is passion. When I am working with a passionate leader, I am absolutely motivated and encouraged and committed because of their passions and their enthusiasm for the work we do. We wear that on our shirtsleeves. ... On my tombstone, it should

> read, "She was passionate about education." If they [i.e., teachers] sense my passion, then that has a positive, positive impact. And the passion has to be in the supervision; it has to be part of that. If I ever come to a point where I am not passionate, then my role as supervisor is going to be greatly diminished. (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School)

Principal Jan defined passion in the context of self-motivation: "People who are fairly driven in their personality, people [who] have that intrinsic value for excellence."

Several respondents expressed that trust and respect were issues they connected to credibility and to strong leadership, and that these affected their motivation and their willingness to work with their supervisor to achieve goals. All respondents referred to high moral values, such as honesty and a strong sense of professional integrity, as supervisor qualities that earned their trust and respect. "I've been very lucky to have administrators that have had a value system that involved integrity and honesty, and the ability to [welcome me to] to come and talk to them" (Teacher Beth, Eastridge School). Teacher Beth included being "forthright and able to give the tough messages," and Teacher Martin referred to his principal's tact and the absence of any hidden agendas, in their descriptions of professional honesty, qualities that they greatly respect in principals, as supervisors. Sometimes, the message can come through clearly when the principal knows when and how to ask questions, or how to phrase

comments to provoke teacher reflection that leads to self-initiated changes in practice, as Principal Adam finds effective in his written notes to teachers that he observes. Educational personnel appreciate constructive criticism delivered by the supervisor in a caring manner that demonstrates concern for the best interests of the staff member and for their development. The professional honesty and tact required in presenting these kinds of messages shares a different perspective that encourages reflection and growth, but these are difficult skills to develop, as Principal Natasha acknowledged when she described her appreciation of her supervisor's skill. "I only hope that I have the skill set, the knowledge, and the fortitude to step up to that plate [when needing to give a tough message to a staff member]" (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School). Teacher Beth linked professional honesty to a supervisor's clear and consistent expectations, explaining that her principal allowed teachers professional freedom, but would "call [teachers] to task to ensure that any plans were consistently what's best for kids." Principal Jan suggested that professional honesty was a professional responsibility, referring to this quality as "being a good critical friend." She extended her description of being a good critical friend to being "a pair of eyes and ears [for her supervisor, the Superintendent, and honestly sharing] the good and bad in what's happening in the district to help him to capture the flavour of the district."

Effectiveness as a school administrator and as a manager emerged as important qualities, in conjunction with other qualities that helped to earn teachers' trust and respect. Principal Natasha respects supervisors who are

> knowledgeable, they're accountable, and they are committed. ... In terms of educating children, their ducks are in a row. They are passionate. It's funny that my level of respect often is in direct correlation to their degree of compassion and commitment to what they do. But, if I don't respect them ... it would be hard for me to have Al Capone, for example, as a supervisor, you know? There has to be an element of respect.

Principals need to demonstrate a high degree of professional responsibility and accountability in achieving the results demanded of their positions. Teacher Beth referred to the importance of principals doing their job, calling this "their due diligence ... just doing the things that they needed to do." Some respondents, principals and teachers, repeatedly referred to accountability as an important component of supervision, expressing beliefs in a need for monitoring by a supervisor to ensure that performance standards remained high and that continuous professional growth was taken seriously. Principal Natasha viewed monitoring by her supervisor in a positive light. She valued professional dialogue with her supervisor, appreciating the ideas that he shared and his feedback as a method of "planting seeds" for her development. Principal Natasha had no doubt that her supervisor was "supervising and watching, all the

time." Offering guiding feedback for reflection, based on observations, is a leadership role that Principal Jan believes is an important part of the supervision process: "The leader has to look and see where someone needs to grow or would like to grow, and then provide the opportunities." Teacher Kathy felt that district Central Office monitoring of school business concerns, such as the school budget and student achievement results, and of the principal's involvement in district initiatives and on district committees helped to improve her principal's effectiveness as a supervisor. Teacher Beth expressed appreciation for supervision that included "always observing" and added the need for principals, as supervisors, to be direct and responsive: "If there's something that doesn't look to be going in the right direction, it's dealt with." As a school administrator, Principal Jan believed it was her professional responsibility to hold teachers accountable for their professional growth, "to monitor and ensure that there's growth and a pathway of learning, [and to] shape what that accountability looks like." She holds herself accountable, too, "to stimulate that [i.e., accountability] in teachers and to give them a safe environment. [Principals] have to coach and to nurture [teachers]."

Closely linked to issues of trust and respect, teachers generally have high expectations of principals to be highly professional, and they need to feel confident that their principal possesses a broad base of knowledge and a high degree of expertise as an educator and as an administrator.

> My expectations are extremely high. I really hate it when my administrators screw up. I really do, because it embarrasses me in my profession and it embarrasses me as a professional, and it reflects poorly on me and it reflects poorly on my school. (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School)

Principal Natasha felt that she could only respect a supervisor that was highly professional, knowledgeable, and experienced, one who "knew their stuff." A few respondents placed high value on the expertise that principals demonstrated as teachers. Principal Adam strongly believes that school and district administrators "should be educators. We need that accreditation, we need the classroom experience." Opportunities for principals to model their expertise in the classroom might be helpful in maintaining the respect of teachers. Teacher Kathy expressed concern that her confidence in her principal is sometimes shaken because

> I'm not so sure that they're [i.e., principals] as well versed in those areas [i.e., teaching strategies] as I am, quite frankly. I'm in that classroom everyday and my administrators aren't. ... I'd like to observe my administrator. That's only fair. I really think administrators forget what it's really like to be in that classroom, and I think that's really, really important.

Teacher Martin's opinion differed from Teacher Kathy's; he placed no importance on having a principal model classroom practice, accepting that the principal's expertise was in an administrative role and feeling confident that he was the expert in his classroom: "Obviously, she can't teach me how to teach [my assigned courses] because that's not where her expertise lies." Principal Jan found that the ongoing professional learning that her supervisor modeled was a behaviour that enhanced her own performance as an administrator and as a supervisor.

> The modeling, the modeling. [My supervisor] showed a balance of his [graduate] studies and certainly his work with the district. He valued research and was very well read himself, and would share, in conversations, the research that he had read or he was working on, and that was certainly always a catalyst for me.

Likewise, Principal Adam welcomed his supervisor's recommendations for professional reading. He found himself "doing a ton of professional reading" that he, in turn, shared with teachers at his school site.

Teachers sense when principals are confident, happy, and enthusiastic in the work they do. A principal's positive attitude influences the school culture and encourages positive attitudes among staff and students, particularly when that person is highly visible and accessible in the school setting, and is openly welcoming of personal contact. The nature of a positive attitude appeared to

deliver an overall perception that an individual is optimistic, caring, encouraging, and generally a happy person. Teacher Beth noted that being positive does not mean that the principal has to be "smiling all the time," similar to Teacher Martin's perception of a positive principal attitude: "I don't mean bouncing around and going happy, happy all the time; that's stupid and that's just as bad as being negative and discouraging." Positive, visible, and approachable principals are more likely to be perceived as encouraging, responsive, and supportive of their staff members, and in response, their staff members tend to "have confidence and faith in [the principal]. ... Visibility is the key. It goes beyond just that one-on-one" (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School). Although Principal Adam believed that visibility of the principal is extremely important, he described improvement in his supervision practice that went beyond visibility alone. In support of district initiative expectations that principals increase time in classrooms, he found that he was very much more involved in classes and providing "incredible, large amount[s] of modeling." Some teacher respondents appreciated an increased sense of collegiality and collaboration brought about by their principal's high visibility and the substantial amount of time they spent in classrooms. Teacher Kathy enjoyed the collegial atmosphere that her principal's time in her classroom created, giving her the sense that "administrators and teachers [are] all doing this together." However, Teacher Martin expressed parameters and cautions in discussing

collaboration and collegiality, believing that "collaboration is not one vote for everybody," and that even though the principal deferred to teacher expertise in particular areas of decision-making, that the principal was still *the boss*. On collegiality, he reflected on the need for balance between the principal being highly visible in the classroom and being intrusive, cautioning that a principal, as supervisor, who is intrusive in the classroom does not portray a message of confidence in the teacher. Principal Natasha compared the need for the principal to be visible, yet unobtrusive, to how good discipline is carried out in the classroom: "Essentially, it's invisible. It happens." A number of other practices can provide principals with an awareness and honest knowledge of what is happening in classrooms. Although Principal Jan does not do a lot of classroom observation in her large school, she believes that "staff know that I've got a handle on them." Regular formal and informal interactions with students and regular school walk-abouts help her to keep abreast of classroom realities: "I'm in touch with what's happening. I'm in touch with students and I'm in touch with [staff]."

A principal's commitment to professional development, combined with a leadership style that places priority on helping teachers and students develop to their potential, exert strong influence on teachers' continuous professional growth, on quality performance, and on attitudes toward supervision. Principal Jan suggests that it is "the principal's responsibility to kind of shape it [i.e.,

professional development], to ensure that there's support, there's time, there's resources, to ensure that professional development can take place." Before creating opportunities for teacher learning, she carefully analyzes school and student results to help her to identify the skill sets that may be lacking in her teachers, and then she consistently models what she expects and initiates focused professional dialogue. Principal Jan attributed her perception of teacher satisfaction with her practices to school-wide, targeted professional development. She admitted to being a controlling influence in terms of professional development undertaken by her teachers, but qualified her control as a means to changing teachers' perceptions about professional development: "P.D. was almost seen as a present (e.g., attendance at a costly sports clinic in a resort location) and you never heard another word about that money that was spent ... and so often, P.D. was done in almost isolation. I had to change that paradigm." Principal Natasha believes that "the principal plays a huge role [in the growth and development of teachers, but] the teacher has to be the centre." The support she provides to her staff, the "bolstering and fostering," is ultimately for the purpose of supporting students. Although she is somewhat involved in working with students directly, Principal Natasha believes that her "most important role is supporting [the] teachers and making sure they can be the best that they can be. If we are not supporting our teachers, then we are not supporting kids and staff in general." Teacher Martin echoed this belief in the

role of the principal in being "an ideal supervisor" and in providing "good supervision." For him, the principal manages and leads by serving, clearly advising staff members that, "My job is to help you do the best job you can in your classroom. How can I serve you to do that?" Principal Natasha puts a great deal of time and effort into encouraging staff to "recognize that real growth is an inner growth and that the real reason for growing has to be intrinsic." She relies heavily on taking advantage of any opportunities for conversations with staff, although she acknowledges that her professional conversations vary in depth and in richness to accommodate individual teachers: "It's just like your classroom; you've got your *A* students or your exceptional students." She readily admits that not all of her conversations are comfortable, and that "sometimes, I feel lonely." Principal Natasha confided that her intrinsic value for continuous professional growth, and her acknowledged passion for learning sometimes "got her into trouble" with staff members who did not possess a similar level of intrinsic motivation for improvement. Memories of early career experiences that she believe helped her to reach her potential as a classroom teacher help to give Principal Natasha confidence that she is doing what is right in demanding high-level performance and continuous professional growth from the teachers she works with.

> I can think of one [principal] who was really pushy and I appreciate it now. I sometimes didn't appreciate it at the time. The one principal who

> probably had the most impact on me was probably the most demanding principal, and at first, I was shocked. And then in hindsight, when I reflect back, I recognize that I grew most under his tutelage and under his care than I grew under anybody. He really held you accountable. (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School)

Underlying the effectiveness of supervisory skills and behaviours of principals, and teacher respect and trust for the work that they do, is the attitude of principals toward teachers as professionals and the work teachers accomplish in their classrooms. The attitude of the principal helps to establish a school culture that is supportive and encouraging, where honest professional feedback is valued in stimulating continuous professional growth, and where teachers feel safe in taking risks. Principal Jan recognized the influence of a principal's attitude toward the work that teachers do: "Whatever they've [i.e., teachers] done, I think they need to be recognized and praised and celebrated." Like Principal Natasha, she ascribed to a collaborative style of leadership and felt confident in her trust of teachers that she identified as leaders in the school. Teacher Martin valued shared leadership practices, believing that teachers would respond positively to expectations for continuous professional growth if they were allowed to "drive change."

The skills, attitudes, and behaviours of the principal, as a professional, as a leader, and as an administrator have a strong influence on success and effectiveness of supervision practices. In conjunction with teacher skills, attitudes, and behaviours, the professional and personal qualities and characteristics of the principal help to establish a school culture, the conditions, and the relationships that support and promote continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance in the school context.

Professional relationships between teachers. Professional relationships between teachers are an integral component in continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance, and in educational supervision, and serve to support or impede these experiences. All respondents emphasized the value of positive collegial relationships in creating conditions where teachers felt secure, supported, and confident in taking risks in their practice and in their learning. Respondents recognized that in this type of environment, teachers played an important role in each other's professional growth and performance. As Teacher Beth observed, sharing a role in the professional growth of colleagues is

> a huge role. It's just so much more important [as teachers] because of the job we do. It's important as a human being to be looking out for not only your interests, but the interests of others ... encouraging people and coming alongside people, and helping them to be the best that they can

> be. I believe there's a lot of good people out there, where if you put someone alongside them, that part of supervision, that they can and will improve, and they will get it, that this is what you do.

Clearly, professional relationships between teachers are directly linked to individual teacher attitudes, skills, and behaviours, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Positive teacher attitudes and a willingness to confront negativity help to support a culture where positive teacher relationships engender a sense of team, working together "for a common goal [and] for the best interests of kids," as noted by Teacher Beth. Teacher Kathy observed that colleagues who are resistant to change or who display negative attitudes often sabotage opportunities for positive relationships between teachers. Teacher Beth commented that "what you do and what you say influences the rest of the staff, be it negative or positive," and firmly denounced negative attitudes: "It's just not tolerated. It's confronted and it's worked with. Most people come around."

Most respondents identified trust and respect as necessary qualities for positive relationships between teachers, as essential qualities for collegiality. As part of the supervision process, observing colleagues' practice and being observed by colleagues, entering into collegial coaching and mentoring roles, being willing to take risks to try new ideas, and confidence in sharing professional growth experiences require honest and open relationships between

teachers. Principal Jan believes that professional dialogue is the key to helping "teachers to be open to new experiences," and that over time, "[sharing] information or [stimulating] the conversation" becomes a natural process for teachers. Teacher Martin included professional dialogue in promoting collaborative planning as a practice that promoted teacher growth and enhanced performance, provided that the teachers are willing to "shut-up and listen, keep [their] ears open, [and] keep [their] eyes open" to new ideas. Principal Adam and Teacher Kathy recalled excellent professional growth experiences that involved modeling, collegial observation, and professional dialogue, a model of reflective practice that they found very positive, whether those experiences involved long-term work with a mentor or a team-teaching situation. Teacher Kathy felt that receiving feedback from a colleague, particularly accolades, was "kind of neat ... a positive experience." Success of these professional experiences is partially dependent on honest relationships between colleagues: "They know exactly what you're doing. If your lesson's shoddy or if you're not pulling your load, they're going to tell you" (Principal Adam, Pine Valley School). Further to this, Teacher Beth expressed that it is a teacher responsibility to honestly and directly communicate concerns about performance or professional conduct with the colleague involved, within the parameters of professional ethics: "The tendency is to talk about it, around the issue, but not

deal with it, and that's never the right thing to do. It's hard, it's very hard, and it's not pleasant."

In discussing professional relationships and practices that impeded continuous collegial growth and quality performance, several respondents referred to unhealthy competition between colleagues. Teacher Kathy referred to this kind of competition as jealousy: "Jealousy is an ugly beast in the teaching profession." Jealousy undermines feelings of professional efficacy, and encourages behaviours that may cause some colleagues to feel intimidated. Principal Adam expressed the same observation of teacher relationships:

> You get those professional jealousies, where you're going to be at one end of the scale or the other, and I don't think there's a middle ground. It will either be, "I have such a hot lesson that I don't want anyone else to do because it steals my thunder. I want all the *oohs* and *aahs* for me," and the other part is, "I really am a brutal teacher and I just want to hide, and I really don't want anyone else to see how poorly I teach.

Professional relationships between teachers and principals.

Professional relationships between teachers and principals were noted by respondents to have very strong influence on continuous, self-directed professional growth of teachers, on the quality of teacher performance, and on teacher perceptions of and responses to supervision. Respondents recognized

that principals have great responsibility and influence on continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance of teachers, and that the supervision process supports principals in these responsibilities. Separate from the impact of positive relationships between teachers, all respondents highlighted collaborative and positive collegial relationships between teachers and principals as driving influences in a school culture where teachers felt secure, supported, and confident in taking risks in their practice and in their learning. Trust, honesty, and respect were noted as the pillars of these collegial relationships and of effective supervision practice. Principal Natasha emphasized, "You need to be totally up front, and it's hard. [Teachers] need to be supervised honestly." Like Principal Adam, honest, open, and direct feedback as critical friends were qualities that Principal Jan valued as part of supportive and enriching collegial relationships with supervisors, past and present. Both of these principals linked a supervisor's feedback directly to professional growth, performance, and practice. Principal Natasha and Teacher Martin suggested that as teachers became accustomed to the principal's presence in the classroom, trust in the principal grew and they found that they benefited from "the principal as a second set of eyes" (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School). On reflection, Teacher Kathy recalled a great respect for and trust in almost all of the principals that she worked with during her career, and noted an excellent relationship with her current principal, largely due to honesty: "[We have] a

very open, very friendly, very frank [relationship]. I am not intimidated by my administrator, nor is [my administrator] intimidated by me."

Further to trust "in" her principal, Teacher Beth felt supported and she appreciated having the trust "of" her principal in her as a professional. Teacher Beth values having

> the freedom as a professional to do things, within the boundaries. It makes for an atmosphere that makes you want to take more initiative and work harder. It's very empowering to you as a professional to use your creativity. It's not top-down.

Being trusted as a professional, and having professional opinions heard and acted on were characteristics that Teacher Kathy expressed as prerequisites for her feeling appreciated as a professional in her relationship with her principal. Teachers Beth, Kathy, and Martin valued opportunities where their principals sought their expertise, their feedback, or their advice, and where their principals truly listened and learned; these experiences helped them to feel trusted as professionals and enhanced their relationships with their principals. These opportunities need to include the principal's openness to disagreement from teachers and a willingness to allow teachers to chart their own path (Principal Adam, Pine Valley School). Placing trust in teachers as professionals give teachers a role in decision-making that affects them and their work, and allows them to have "a bigger buy-in," according to Principal Jan. Teacher Beth agreed

that "a shared leadership model engenders ownership from pretty much everybody." A principal-teacher relationship removed from a traditional top-down hierarchy was identified as critical to teacher professional growth and perceptions of strong administrator support by Principal Natasha. She preferred to consider the teacher-principal relationship as a partnership, much like that which exists between teachers and students. Principal Natasha noted that "principals who really had an impact on me growing [i.e., as a teacher] were the ones who I perceived being beside, not ahead of me pulling me or behind pushing me, but rather walking alongside." For Principal Natasha, the principal's role as an instructional leader and as a supervisor, and teacher growth are inhibited if teachers perceive that "it's the principal as the horse pulling the cart." Teacher Beth found that a delicate balance existed between walking alongside to support and help a teacher and the principal appearing to be in control by offering suggestions or "advice that's not asked for [and] is not usually appreciated."

Honesty and reciprocal trust (i.e., trust in the principal by teachers and trust in teachers by the principal) engender mutual respect between principals and teachers, and are important characteristics of supportive supervision practices promoting continuous, self-directed professional growth and improvement of practice. Mutual respect in the relationship extends to kindness and caring in professional interactions. Teacher Beth felt the respect of her

principal and acknowledged a professional bond that helped to give her confidence and comfort in open dialogue with the principal. She felt that her principal was successful in balancing compassion with high expectations because within professional relationships with the teachers, there was the "feeling like someone's (i.e., the principal) looking out for your best interests and understanding that you do work hard." The mutual trust and respect, and the encouragement that Teacher Martin felt within his relationship with his principal were credited for his commitment to Graduate level studies and a professional growth plan that would lead him toward a future position of leadership. For him, the principal's active support, honest feedback, and interest were factors in the collaborative planning of his professional growth; for him, a positive collegial relationship and a focus on professional development were the essence of the supervision process.

Principal Natasha recounted an experience where she received less than positive feedback from a supervisor. She felt that the directness and the honesty of the message might have been offensive if it had been delivered in a less than caring manner, or if a trusting relationship had not already been established with her supervisor, but since this was not the case, she valued the message and felt that she grew because of it. Giving tough messages is never an easy or welcome task for principals, but when these kinds of messages need to be discussed with a teacher, it is important that the principal show respect for the teacher through

personal communication. Where receiving negative feedback from a supervisor served to enhance Principal Natasha's growth, Principal Adam felt angry, abandoned, and unfairly treated, and found that his growth was inhibited when he did not receive negative feedback directly from his supervisor: "Don't send me the *B* team to deliver bad messages. You better tell me. Don't do things that would make me feel that the work that I do is not important or is not worthy of your attention. I don't need someone to talk to me on [the supervisor's] behalf." Communication issues are often at the root of breakdown in the principal-teacher relationship, and as described by Teacher Martin, "It's not going to work," if information is not shared openly, honestly, and completely; communication breakdowns initiate negative supervision experiences. For Teacher Martin, it is important that the principal tactfully put "the cards on the table. ... I certainly don't like beating about the bush and hidden agendas." Likewise, Principal Adam valued "very straight forward and frank conversations, no punches pulled. ... Everything on the table, and brutally honest and brutally direct, you [know] exactly where you [stand]. Unless you [are] as dumb as a post, there [is] no misunderstanding."

Although Principal Adam worked to establish positive relationships with the teachers he worked with, where mutual trust and respect allowed him to share honest feedback as part of his supervision practice, he felt that the parameters of any collegial relationship were narrowed if disciplinary or

performance issues led to an evaluative process: "At some point the collegialness [sic] disappears." On reflection, he suggested that a true collegial relationship between the principal, as a supervisor, and a teacher is a myth in reality. A collegial relationship is similarly difficult with teachers who may lack confidence in their performance, internal motivation for improvement, or who have difficulty seeing the principal as a supporter. Principal Jan expressed frustration with teachers of this nature, "the unwilling [because] they're so suspect of my intent. ... They're not trusting of your leadership. A lot of teachers still resent the fact that [the principal] would like to play a role in their professional development." Teacher Kathy expressed resentment in the power that she perceives principals hold as supervisors, particularly when teachers were made to feel "belittled," as they would feel if the principal put themselves "on a pedestal, another plateau, and was looking down at [teachers]." As any sense of the principal in an evaluative or superordinate position often undermines positive relationships with teachers, principals who did not demonstrate active interest in teachers' work and activities, or who did not work with teachers towards continuing professional growth and improved performance, were also viewed as an impediment to teacher growth and performance. Principal Natasha felt taken for granted and "stalled" in terms of her growth as a teacher when she worked with a principal who was rarely visible in the classroom or available for professional conversations. "Actually, I didn't

look at that as freedom, I looked at it as almost shackles. ... I was almost in a void" (Principal Natasha, Haven Hill School). Teacher Beth termed this kind of experience as neglect, a lack of principal-teacher relationship, where quality one-on-one time did not exist. Principal Jan expressed similar feelings as a teacher when "a principal just let me do what I wanted. [That] did not really help me reflect on my practice."

Other factors: time, money, and opportunity. Time, money, and opportunity emerged as other factors that have underlying, but significant influence on continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance of educational personnel, and on perceptions of and responses to educational supervision. These factors are intertwined with professional relationships between teachers, and between teachers and principals, with the organizational culture of the school and of the district, and with perceptions of educational personnel of the supervision process and its purpose.

Schools whose culture embraced professional development as a professional responsibility and as the basis of supervision practice placed high priority on ensuring that time, money, and opportunity were available to the fullest extent possible within the school budget and organization to provide for all staff members' professional development needs and interests. At Mason Ridge School, Principal Jan found that modeling by the principal helped to create a culture where teachers requested professional development, took

advantage of any opportunities that came available, and shared their learning with school colleagues and with division-level colleagues in other district schools. Principal Adam, too, identified value in modeling by the principal as a change agent: "I believe that as a principal, we should be the leaders, we should be the models." The principal and teachers at Mason Ridge School searched for promising opportunities, found the money required to pay for the learning and to release teachers, and made the time for professional dialogue that arose from their learning to develop new strategies and practices. Principal Jan acknowledged that it took time to change teacher attitudes toward the purpose and outcomes of professional development as supervision, but patience and committed resources helped her to achieve the desired goals. She placed high priority on professional development in contrast to her earlier career experiences that she found "very limiting" in their lack of funds, materials and resources, and principal modeling. In schools where professional development was not yet an established professional priority, Teacher Kathy suggested that increased focus on the importance of professional development would be of benefit: "It happens all the time; once you start focusing on something, it's bound to get better." She, too, referred to the necessity of principal support and modeling, and expressed value for professional learning opportunities that the principal kept abreast of and shared with teachers, for the allotment of budget resources toward

professional development, and for the positive attitude of the principal toward teacher interests, needs, and initiatives.

Despite awareness of professional development opportunities and of the need for continuous professional growth, time and money repeatedly arose as issues of concern for respondents. "Money is very tight at this moment and having to justify resources is one thing. ... Obviously, when you have a school budget, you have to think about money" (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School). Principal Adam believed that quality supervision practice by principals required time, "We have to be able to build that time in," but translated time into money as "an issue that has to be tied to it." Teacher Kathy desired increased principal time in her classroom, finding that cursory, *pop-in* visits by the principal were insufficient and ineffective, and that the principal had limited, if any, time for reflective conversations about her practice. In addition to principal time in the classroom, peer observation and follow-up professional dialogue between teachers, collaborative planning, sharing time for professional development experiences, and time to review current educational research as part of quality supervision practice required dedicated time, most importantly during the school day. Teacher Martin recognized this as a need in improving teacher practice, but expressed concern with the challenges of allocating required time and money for these experiences. The weekly thirty or forty-five minutes for collaborative

planning time that was often provided for him within the school budget and organization was valued, but he felt,

> It's not enough. ... I need to talk to my colleagues about how to better teach [a particular concept] and spread my ideas, and [colleagues] can share things with me. We don't have the time to do that, not on a regular enough basis. ... I know that all that comes down to funding. Time and money, it's really difficult. (Teacher Martin, Mountain Crest School)

Teacher Kathy believed that teachers generally desire increased professional time with peers as an important component of continuous professional growth and quality performance. Despite this, she passionately shared a conflicting perception:

> The prevalent attitude [among teachers is that] teachers are feeling bombarded, that teachers don't have enough time, and that they just don't want anything added to their plate. ... It's a very challenging profession and some [teachers] have just thrown up their arms ... enough is enough. (Teacher Kathy, Sunhurst School)

The tone of responses made it increasingly evident that respondents felt they had few options and little control over time and money issues in relation to desirable supervision and related professional practices that support continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality practice. As Principal Adam

reflected, time and money were restraints at the school level, in spite of a system of site-based decision-making and a district initiative that highlighted professional development. He felt strongly that until changes in the structure of the organization included changes in principal roles and responsibilities, and until educational funding was increased, time and money would continue to impede quality supervision, continuous professional growth and improved practice, and learning outcomes for students.

Chapter Summary

The perceptions of three principals and three teachers indicate concern, disillusionment, and dissatisfaction with the majority of their supervision experiences, whether in a position of supervisor or as the individual being supervised. Their views are generally coloured by confusion between supervision and evaluation, with the terms, purposes, and related actions often used interchangeably. Principals and teachers agree that supervision is necessary and generally view supervision as an accountability process to ensure quality performance. Understanding of provincial and district policy is not comprehensive, particularly among teachers, and is often not accurately or consistently applied in practice in the school context. Although relatively recent actions in practice demonstrate increasing value for professional development and for collaborative, collegial practices, the interrelationship of these practices and their connection to supervision is not consistent or clear to most

practitioners. Relationships between teachers and principals, as supervisors, are generally positive, but there continues to be a sense of hierarchy and a degree of distrust for school administrators, as "bosses," who continue to hold power and perceived control over teachers in their professional development and in decisions related to teacher performance. Teachers and principals have some idea of what they might need to effect meaningful, continuing professional growth and have high expectations of themselves in relation to their performance, but feel frustrated by colleagues whose negative attitudes undermine enthusiasm and commitment to growth-oriented collegial activities. Although teachers refer to themselves and are referred to by principals as professionals, a clear understanding of what it is to be professional and of the responsibilities of teachers as professionals is elusive. The three teachers and three principals felt strongly about their own motivation and actions toward continuing professional growth and excellence in performance, but were less positive about any meaningful influence that educational supervision, as they understand and experience it, has on these activities.

A keen desire for change in how educational supervision is viewed and practiced in the school context is apparent among teachers and principals. Unfortunately, few feel that change is forthcoming, or believe that they might have any influence or degree of control in change.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss inferences made from analysis of the findings, and to highlight links between the findings and the literature review. The research problem and its associated questions guide analysis of the findings. Literature not reviewed in Chapter Two, including more recent research, is used to enrich my interpretations. As stated in Chapter Three, caution needs to be exercised in generalizing the findings of this study across other settings, largely due to the select nature of the respondent group. However, general consistency in responses and direct or indirect relation of these to the literature suggest a degree of validity in interpretation, and along with the rich description of the context, the ability for the reader to transfer what is learned here to similar settings.

Perceptions of supervision. Common agreement and theory about the definition of supervision and its primary purpose in the educational context have not yet been achieved, and links between supervision and evaluation continue to influence perceptions about supervision, with those perceptions generally being negative.

The definition of supervision, including its predominant purpose, continues to be an elusive question that defies common response among scholars and practitioners. The uncertainty and the frustration surrounding any attempt to

agree on a definition of supervision or to articulate its purpose (Alfonso, 1990, as cited in Ebmeier, 1999, p. 352; Glanz,1997, p. 201, p. 203) is supported by the difficulties expressed by respondents in discussing these ideas. Sergiovanni and Starratt's (2002) work recognizes, articulates, and distinguishes between supervision, "as a process for promoting teacher growth and enhanced student learning" (p. 276), and summative evaluation, which "involves coming to a conclusion or making a judgment about the quality of the teacher's performance" (p. 276). Nolan and Hoover (2004) also define the fundamental differences between supervision and evaluation, but believe both are necessary and complementary processes (p. 35). Heller's (2004) work, too, provides distinction between supervision and evaluation, acknowledging the terms as "a thorny issue ... [and] volatile" (p. 71). Scholars and many practitioners are able to express these ideas, but the reality remains that in practice and perception, the distinction between supervision and evaluation continues to be clouded, inconsistent, and untrustworthy. In reviewing beliefs and models related to supervision, Nolan and Hoover (2004) contend, "The world of practice is at least as confused as the world of scholarship. ... The world of supervision has also suffered from failure to devise commonly accepted definitions for important concepts" (p. 26), similar to earlier thoughts expressed by Glanz (1997, p. 201, p. 203). For respondents, in their attempts to articulate a definition of supervision, the meaning of the term generally ties to the process itself and to

past experiences, with most respondents expressing disillusionment and feelings of general dissatisfaction with the process that may be involved and with its lack of value to them as practitioners. Being able to agree on a commonly held definition of supervision, however, would likely hold minimum influence in moving learning and practice in the field of supervision ahead. Although understanding and accepting common definitions could provide a stable, initial base for practice, the ability to articulate definitions is without consequence if what continues to occur at the school level remains meaningless, unsatisfactory, or rooted in the past.

Few respondents appear conversant with current theories and assumptions related to supervision, and this helps to make a commonly held definition of supervision problematic, partially for lack of knowledge and understanding. Instead, respondent beliefs and attitudes about supervision are constructed from the reality of their supervisory experiences, as supervisors and as those being supervised. Creating knowledge from the reality of experiences is important and has merit; within the respondents' reality, generally traditional beliefs and attitudes about supervision are embedded in respondents' understandings of the nature and purpose of the supervision process in the school context.

A consistent theme of accountability as the primary purpose for supervision is noted in my findings. Both principals and teachers strongly

support a need for supervision, directly or indirectly expressing a common belief that through supervision, teachers can be monitored and held accountable for meeting a minimum performance standard (i.e., determination of competence). This theme is observed in the literature, with supervision historically being guided by a model of inspection and evaluation, both denoting autocratic and bureaucratic functions. In this context, teachers are passive recipients of a required process wherein a superordinate holding supervisory authority and implied expertise identifies their shortcomings and recommends areas for improvement. An awareness of the historical evolution of supervision, the result of the context and thinking of the past, provides information that helps to explain current practices and beliefs, and can help to supply the wisdom of experience to future changes and practices in supervision (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000, p. 5). With an understanding of the historical path and an awareness of the reality of practice, scholars identified an urgent need for change in the field of supervision almost three decades ago. Yet, as recently as the late 1990s, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) acknowledge that "the field of supervision is in transition and redefinition" (as cited in Beach & Reinhartz, 2000, p. 7), and their most current work "continues a 30-year tradition of continuously redefining the field of supervision in response to changing school contexts, policies, and realities" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, p. xvi). The call for change in supervision thinking and actions, with acknowledgement that supervision is in

constant transition, continues. Despite this, there has been almost no notable change over the years in how supervision is perceived, practised, and experienced by practitioners, and much of the current thinking in the field suggests little more than marginal shifts in direction or revisions to practice. For example, one of the most recent texts in the area of supervision identifies supervision as necessary in effecting change, in monitoring and assisting teachers in effecting required changes, and in overseeing teacher planning to ensure consistent implementation of sequenced curricula (Oliva & Pawlas, 2004, pp. 37 – 56). The nature of these ideas continue to suggest assumptions of supervision, often with links to evaluation, for the purposes of accountability and continuing teacher competency (Tucker & Stronge, 2005, p. 6). A recent work by Nolan and Hoover (2004) deems both supervision and evaluation as essential functions, and their work emphasizes the distinctness of each process "in terms of basic purpose, rationale for their existence, scope of the process, nature of the relationship between the participants, observation procedures employed, role of expertise in the process, and teacher's perspective on the process" (p. 35). They combine supervision and evaluation as complementary components in a system that provides "assurance that the performance of all professionals is at least at a minimum level of competence" (Nolan & Hoover, 2004, p. 35), providing differentiation in the two processes by suggesting that "teacher evaluation ensures that all teachers function at a satisfactory level of

performance, and teacher supervision provides opportunities for teachers to grow far beyond minimally acceptable levels of performance" (p. 27); again, the notions of accountability and of overseeing are reinforced. Tucker and Stronge (2005) describe teacher evaluation, for them being a driver of professional development and improved results with students, as "a major component of the educational agenda today" (p. 25). Along with supervision, an almost invisible process of change continues to influence education in general, including how schools are defined as institutions of learning, and the roles and relationships of principals and teachers. The changes are generally superficial, though, as observed by Littky and Grabelle (2004): "The world is changing – schools are not" (p. 32). It is little wonder that practitioners continue to view supervision as an accountability process, and that confusion continues to exist about the nature of supervision and evaluation. Both principal and teacher respondents link supervision closely to evaluation, as a component of or as a complement to evaluation; further, several frequently reference supervision interchangeably with evaluation, not only as a defining term, but also as a process. Clear links in beliefs, in practice, and in experiences connect supervision to evaluation, and these links continue to colour expectations of the supervisory process and perceptions of supervision experiences.

It is evident in the findings, as it is in the literature, that discourse on supervision enters an emotionally charged arena. Negative perceptions of

supervision and meaningless supervisory experiences emerge as a common theme as respondents share their stories and their understandings of colleagues' experiences and perceptions. Descriptions of unsatisfactory and distressing experiences in being supervised are distinctly and sometimes emotionally recalled, even when positive supervision experiences are more prevalent in their current realities. Patterns of negative perceptions and experiences with supervision are equally felt by teachers and by principals, in roles as supervisors and as those being supervised. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) note teachers' negative experiences of being supervised as "encounters [that] can destroy autonomy, self-confidence, and personal integrity" (p. 55), and further that "supervision as practiced by some supervisors is not only nonprofessional, it is dehumanizing and unethical" (p. 55). The literature recognizes negative perceptions of supervision and considers historical paradigms of supervision as a means to oversee, direct, or provide authority control of work or workers as the root of such perceptions among educational practitioners (Glickman et al., 2001). Lack of involvement and control in the supervision process, as suggested by Beerans (2000), combined with a sense of inferiority to supervisors as experts who provide feedback, and without evidence that supervision positively influences practice, fuels negative perceptions about supervision. For some respondents, formal supervision experiences appear to be a regularly scheduled occurrence (e.g., every three years), much like an evaluation where an

impressive lesson is planned and taught, observed, and then commented on by the supervisor. The occasion takes on the feeling of a rehearsed performance, and results in an altogether unsatisfactory and meaningless experience. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) recognize the realities of practice, and suggest, "Neither teachers nor administrators are very satisfied with the present procedures" (p. 164); ... too often the system takes on a certain artificial or mechanical quality, a routine functioning that becomes an end in itself" (p. 165). A tone of something being done to teachers, as in being observed, being monitored, or being provided with feedback to note successes or to define areas for improvement, continues to guide respondent beliefs and perceptions about supervision, and this is noted as a common theme across responses. The analysis of responses also indicates a degree of managerial purpose in discussing supervision: Are teachers doing what they are expected to be doing at a given time, as determined by the supervisor, and by organizational routines and policies? Supervision in this context likewise links the process to a historically hierarchical model of supervision as inspection, as being overseen, and further supports the confusion between supervision and evaluation. Although a number of scholars clearly emphasize the necessity of separating supervision and evaluation as distinct processes, they acknowledge that the "dilemma ... remains unresolved" (Glanz, 1995, as cited in Gleave, 1997, pp. 271-272). Principal Adam's (Pine Valley School) perception that "for the most part, [principals]

supervise the way that [they] were supervised," provides insight into why supervisors and those that they supervise continue to be rooted in traditional beliefs, attitudes, and practices in relation to supervision. Practitioners continue to struggle with the supervision-evaluation dilemma, with few in the school context having sufficient or relevant grounding in theory, or being aware of a range of positive or progressive supervisory experiences and models from which to draw when constructing a platform for their own practice.

Literature has long included improvement of instruction within the definition of supervision (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; DuFour, 1991; Ellermeyer, 1992; Glickman et al., 2001; Wiles & Bondi, 1991); in fact, a similar purpose was identified as early as 1926 (Barr & Burton, 1926, as cited by Glickman, 1992, p. 37). A defining statement by Wanzare and da Costa (2000), "The overarching purpose of supervision is to enhance teachers' professional growth by providing them with feedback regarding effective classroom practices" (p. 49), summarizes the current thinking of many scholars. Supervision in support of continuous professional growth to improve instruction, then, is also part of the historical supervision paradigm; common practice is for a supervisor, often the principal, who has the authority and believed expertise, to observe and provide constructive feedback to the teacher, or to guide the teacher in coming to relevant conclusions about their practice. Almost all respondents discussed continuous professional growth and improvement of practice as

important purposes of supervision, albeit not the primary purposes. This is an interesting finding, as the district selected for the study has long emphasized continuous professional growth and quality performance in its mission and in its rationale for supervision practices conducted by the principal. Further, this district's current initiative supports intense focus on improving student achievement through best practices in teaching and learning as the focal point for all positions and for all activities within the district, a critical outcome of supervision as indicated by Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002, p. 6). However, none of the respondents extended their discussion about the purposes of supervision as supporting continuous professional growth and improving instruction in the classroom to include improving student achievement. I suspect that if respondents were challenged to reflect at a deeper level, several would have acknowledged that ultimately, improved student achievement provided the impetus for the focus on continuous professional learning and improved professional practice. Further, by deepening reflection, respondents may have been able to more clearly articulate their understandings of the purposes of supervisory actions that they currently perceive as primarily summative in nature to recognize the potentially formative and lasting value of the process. The extension of the purpose of supervision to include improving student achievement is recognized by DuFour (2002), who encourages "a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning" (p. 13). Although DuFour's thinking

has not yet been widely addressed by his peers, his idea is clearly becoming a common understanding in the district involved in the study. The shift in focus allows the focus of supervision to remain on the teacher and on improvement of practice, but for a greater ultimate purpose, where energies are more clearly directed to students and to their learning.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) recognize that beliefs, values, and practices in the field of supervision are locked in an extended process of change (as cited in Beach & Reinhartz, 2000, p. 7). In an indication of acceptance of this understanding, Beerens (2000) suggests that focussing less on perceptions about supervision and evaluation, and acknowledging dissatisfaction with current practices may help to create a more urgent appetite for change. The findings in this study provide evidence of dissatisfaction with current supervision practices, and recognize the confusion and lack of direction acknowledged in the literature. Unfortunately, despite attempts to recognize, study, and address generally negative perceptions of supervision, very little has changed in this field of practice. The literature and the findings of this study provide mutual support to the purpose and context defined for the study, that initiating and implementing change in supervision practice in the school context continues to be a perplexing challenge.

Supervision Practice: Factors Impacting Continuous, Self-directed Professional Growth and Quality Performance

Organization culture. Organizational culture, including provincial, school district, and school-site policies and practices have substantial influence on the commitment of school-based educational personnel to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance.

Respondents consistently express high value for collaboration and for collegial experiences in relation to continuous, self-directed professional growth, although few connect these concepts to supervision. Riordan's (1998) research corroborates the value of collaboration: "the effective schools literature ... has consistently reported that one of the distinguishing features of effective schools is the existence of a collaborative culture among teachers" (p. 9). This belief is frequently highlighted in literature from the past fifteen years that was reviewed for the purpose of this study (Bambino, 2002; Blase & Blase, 1998; Cohen, 2002; da Costa, 1995; Dufour, 1991; Lambert, 1998; Routman, 2002; Schmoker, 1996; Speck, 1999). Glickman et al. (2001) cautioned that "the legacy of the one-room schoolhouse" (p. 20), referring to a traditional school culture characterized by teacher autonomy and isolation, continues to have a "pervasive grip on the minds and actions of many teachers and schools" (p. 20). As observed by Speck (1999), "Many aspects of the current structure of schools work against collaboration" (p. 105).

A degree of change is becoming evident, most visibly in elementary school sites, with most respondents observing that the isolation and closed-door attitudes commonly held by colleagues in the past are quickly becoming history, as colleagues in their respective school contexts are becoming increasingly accustomed to welcoming their peers into their classrooms to observe teaching and learning in action. The open-door attitudes encourage collegial sharing and increased collaboration, and lead to increased professional dialogue and reflection on practice. Speck (1999) suggests that a culture of collaboration such as that "is the exception, not the rule" (p. 105). Respondents that indicate these kinds of collegial experiences recognize that their district places high value on and strongly encourages increased collaboration at the school level and across the district, as part of its initiative to improve teaching and learning. However, there is some incongruity in that provincial and district policies continue to recognize traditional, one-to-one teacher-supervisor relationships. This factor has the potential to undermine collaborative work, to reinforce hierarchical barriers, and to discourage collective responsibilities for improvement. The literature indicates strong agreement for collaboration, ongoing reflection, and professional growth as a direction in improving teaching and learning (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Beach & Reinhartz, 1989; Blase & Blase, 1998; Cohen, 2002; Glickman et al., 2001; Sergiovanni, 1991), and suggests that these professional activities need to be the focus of supervision. A few respondents state or imply a

connection between professional collaboration, collective responsibility for outcomes, improved practice through professional development, and improved learning and results for students; yet, they do not appear to consistently recognize the link of the professional activities that they value to supervision, except for one principal who believes that professional development *is* supervision. This principal's thinking supports a direction encouraged in the literature, that being the links between a supervision process focused on professional growth and improvement. The literature recognizes this focus as an outcome of the trend toward collaborative, collegial, and collective practices, supposing that these serve to promote an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect necessary for an effective supervision process that encourages professional growth (Costa & Garmston, 1994; da Costa & Riordan, 1997; Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999; Garubo & Rothsein, 1998; Glickman et al., 1998, as cited in Firth & Pajak, 1998; Lambert, 1998; Pavan, 1997, in Glanz & Neville, 1997). Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) extend this thinking by conceptualizing supervision as a form of professional development (p. 173), adding *renewal* as a development alternative that promotes increased teacher responsibility and self-direction (pp. 205–220). Whatever the term, replacing negative perceptions of supervision by consciously linking the process to improved knowledge and practice through continuous, self-directed professional learning and growth

helps to create an aura of hope, optimism, and enthusiasm to move forward in practice.

Provincial and district policies and practices related to supervision, professional growth, and performance greatly influence the professional culture and the atmosphere at the school level. School culture, and related organizational structures and routines are identified as influential variables in the literature. Scholars suggest that variables may include: collaborative planning and collegial relationships; the school as a community of learners; high expectations; shared goals; a nurturing school culture that focuses on improving learning for teachers and learners; clear, two-way communication between supervisor and teacher; a shared vision; strategies that alleviate teacher isolation; time for collaboration; and time for professional dialogue about teaching and learning (Blase & Blase, 1999; Dean, 2002; Garubo & Rothstein, 1998; Haughey & Ratsoy, 1993, as cited in Woitas, 1996; Speck, 1999). In achieving a culture of professional development, Speck (1999) suggests a model that is "a synthesis of the growing body of research, not only in professional development, but also in adult learning theory, shared leadership, effective schools, and the change process" (pp. 152-153).

Respondents generally acknowledge that a commitment to professional development needs to be part of a school's culture, part of the professional learning community commitment that a number of respondents' schools are

working to embrace. With a sense of support at the provincial and district levels, these respondents express confidence that their efforts to improve their practice through collaboration, collegial activities, and professional development are valued and important. Although few respondents feel guided by the role of supervision in professional growth or believe that supervisory feedback has lasting impact on their practice, all suggest that involvement in professional growth needs to be a career-long commitment for all educational personnel, regardless of skill level or degree of expertise, and that this commitment needs to be more dependent on a self-motivated, intrinsic need as a professional than on direction from a supervisor or organizational requirements. This finding is supported in the literature, where meaningful professional growth experiences throughout a practitioner's career are emphasized (Day, 1999; Fullan, 1995, as cited in Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; Glickman et al., 2001). With the emphasis on continuous, self-directed professional growth and improvement in professional practice, practitioners must continually affirm the primary purpose of their work, as cautioned by Speck (1999) and other scholars, that "educators must never forget that the objective of professional development is to increase student learning" (p. 156). Further, practitioners can take pride in knowing that their learning efforts have a powerful impact on student learning, and can collectively come to accept that learning, improvement, and renewal as professionals is a "journey [with] no final destination" (DuFour et al., 2004, p. 140).

Time and resources for professional development and for collaboration and collegial activities were additional factors that several respondents express value for when discussing continuous professional growth and quality performance. They are cognizant of the importance of organizational culture in terms of district and school-site support for these activities, whether this support is monetary, in providing opportunities, or through expressions of recognition. Although these support actions are not a primary focus in the literature, the influential variables related to school culture and to organizational structures and policies that are discussed generally cite commitment of time and resources. Speck (1999) specifically suggests that "school districts have primary responsibility for providing the resources – time, money, personnel, and materials – that a school needs to implement programs and instructional practices through professional development activities" (p. 161). Speck (1999) recognizes that "schools must join in the search for money to pay for these activities" (p. 161). Respondents acknowledge the challenges that schools face in providing support resources (i.e., financial and time) that allow a culture of professional development to thrive, particularly when budget allocations are already stretched to provide for a myriad of other school needs and responsibilities. Despite acknowledging that quality, ongoing professional development requires priority commitment in school budget planning and

allocation, the reality is that this level of commitment is not a norm across all schools.

In discussing provincial, district, and school-site policies related to supervision, all respondents emphasize the need for consistent performance standards (e.g., provincial Teaching Quality Standard), another organizational culture factor that influences continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Discussion of consistent performance standards links to earlier descriptions of beliefs about the purposes of supervision (i.e., accountability and assurance that a minimum performance standard is met), and provincial and district policies do provide for this. Although several respondents note the value of the Teaching Quality Standard document as a guide for reflection, critical self-analysis, and planning for continuing professional growth, they have concern about many of their colleagues' lack of knowledge of this document. Further, several observe minimal attention of colleagues in creating and monitoring their respective teacher professional growth plans. Although these individual growth plans are a provincial requirement and a professional responsibility, and planning/goal-setting for professional improvement is highlighted or, at minimum, alluded to in the literature, sometimes in relation to professional portfolios or to action research (Beerens, 2000; Dean, 2002; DuFour, 1991; Gabriel, 2005; McEwan, 2003; Oliva & Pawlas, 2004), it appears that many practitioners find little value in what they

perceive to be a bureaucratic paperwork requirement. This is unfortunate and troubling, as growth plans are intended to give teachers control over their learning and professional development, and would be expected to encourage teacher motivation for continuous learning and improvement. Rubin (1989) reminds us, "Personal commitment and involvement are likely to be limited when teachers must follow dictums devised by others" (as cited in Day, 1999, p. 206). From the respondents' discussion, it does not appear that their colleagues do not set goals, for many, likely most, do; it is just that documentation of professional goals is not perceived to have notable impact on the day-to-day teaching, learning, and reflection that occurs in the classroom. Although policies and mandates can have the effect of deterring effective professional activities, likely due to a perception of being controlled, the findings show that some policy requirements are viewed in a more positive way by practitioners. For example, a few respondents, generally principals, express appreciation for the open-ended format currently held by provincial and district policies on supervision; for teachers, active involvement in the supervision process as provided in policy is identified as empowering. Most respondents express value for any opportunity for teachers and supervisors to have input into supervision processes that may be conducted in individual school sites, as these can then be tailored to address individual school needs, and could have greater likelihood of being accepted and supported by a school's staff group. The literature does not

generally reference policy specifically, but does recognize the importance of tending to the needs of teachers as critical players who make the biggest difference in school reform (Cohen, 2002, p. 532). The theme of teacher choice, control over instructional improvement, and involvement in decisions that affect their work is evident in related contexts presented in the literature (Glickman et al., 2001, p. 116; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, pp. 208 – 210). This theme has strong potential for supervision practice, and for commitment to continuous professional growth and quality performance through collaboration and collegial activities. Teacher choice and control in relation to their professional practice and direction supports tenets of adult learning and appears to be an accepted expectation among practitioners, but scholars and practitioners agree that these actions are not without their challenges and cautions. Glickman et al. (2001) caution that reflective practice, self-direction, and responsibility for quality performance are goals to work toward, not qualities that can be assumed. Study findings provide a degree of support for this caution.

According to respondents, collective and individual reflective activities are occurring with greater acceptance and frequency in some school contexts, but these practices and their outcomes are not yet widely used or securely embedded within the organizational culture, even in school sites where they have been introduced. Further, some respondents express frustration with negative attitudes of some colleagues that easily sabotage school efforts to

empower teachers with responsibility for professional growth and performance. Where there may be an appetite for increased collective responsibility for growth, performance, and results, enduring attitudes of distrust for the supervision process and traditional beliefs of hierarchical control are factors that undermine potential advances in supervisory practice that support continuous professional growth and quality performance through improved practice. Several respondents recognize that change and risk-taking are threatening and very difficult for many of their colleagues; some suggest that a factor in achieving success may be to allow sufficient time for members of a school and across the district to understand, accept, and effect desired changes in supervision practice.

Another relevant factor suggested by the findings in promoting continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance is how teachers are viewed as professionals, both in policy and in practice. Pellicer (2003) suggests that the personal personnel philosophy of the leader, being the principal in the school context, and their desire to do whatever necessary to support and assist those that they lead, greatly influences the potential that teachers believe themselves capable of, their desire to improve and become the best that they can be, and their ultimate success in their work. Consideration of the personal personnel philosophy of a supervisor has important implications in the supervision process. As discussed previously, Greene (1992), too, believes that "teacher supervision does lead to professional development" (p. 148). She

considers this belief from a different perspective, one that recognizes that how those in authority (i.e., school, district, and provincial decision-makers) view teachers is a necessary element in effecting change in supervision practice. Greene (1992) suggests that nothing less than "an unshakable vision of teachers as competent professionals able and willing to take control of their own professional lives" (p. 148), combined with "effort, goodwill, [and] commitment" (p. 148) will achieve change that allows supervision to lead to meaningful professional development. The link between a view of teachers as professionals and professional development is emphasized by DuFour (1991, p. 31). Similarly, Pajak (2003) recommends that supervisors "enter into dialogue [with teachers] with the assumption that the teacher is professionally competent, [prepared to treat them] ... as intelligent professional colleagues" (p. 46). Whitaker (2003) extends this principle with the assumption that "all teachers do the best they know how" (p. 36) and suggests, "If we want them to do better, we must help them improve their skills and master new ones" (p. 35). Speck (1999) also emphasizes the need for teachers to be viewed as competent professionals, but contends, "Current supervisory practices often foster mediocrity, discourage innovation, and destroy any motivation or responsibility to make changes" (p. 161); she attributes these results directly to a school's culture.

The theme of how teachers are viewed by school and district authorities emerged indirectly in the findings, often through descriptions of unsatisfactory

supervisory or collegial experiences. Respondents' discussion emphasizes the merit of an assumption that all teachers are competent professionals with a desire to do the best that they know how as a basic principle of a positive supervision experience. The conundrum of whether it is teacher attitudes of themselves as professionals or attitudes toward teachers as professionals that is stalling improvement in supervision practice provides further context for this study. Scholars and practitioners recognize the dilemma. Speck (1999) comments that "teacher professionalism is the expected norm within schools but is too rarely practiced. Its absence deletes a critical element from the development of a working, collegial learning community" (p. 111). Rosenholtz and Kyle (1984) consider the definition of professionalism in terms of what it is to be a professional (as cited in Speck, 1999, p. 111); their thinking provides a practical direction for further reflection, as solutions to move the work forward continue to be sought.

Teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours strongly influence success in achieving continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. The findings suggest that teachers and principals clearly recognize the importance of an overall positive school atmosphere and positive personnel attitudes, in general, and specifically toward supervision, continuous professional growth, collegiality and collaboration, and quality performance. As

discussed earlier, a sense of frustration with persistent negative attitudes of some school-based educational personnel are evident in the findings, and this a factor that impedes commitment to and success in collaborative work, in reflective activities, in professional growth, and toward supervision. Reluctance to request or accept professional support, difficulties in participating positively in collegial interactions, hesitancy to engage in professional development, resistance in attempting or implementing new ideas, denial of concerns, a satisfaction with mediocrity, and an uncommitted work ethic are issues raised by respondents in relation to negative teacher attitudes and behaviours. Respondents did not extend their discussion to suggest possible reasons for the negative attitudes or resistance of some of their colleagues, and almost none express a willingness to confront their colleagues' negativity. Teacher respondents, in particular, indicate no appetite for initiating this nature of dialogue with their colleagues, although they strongly believe that negative attitudes need to be addressed. Few respondents articulate a belief that as professionals, teachers have a responsibility to confront negativity or sabotaging efforts of their colleagues. Instead, they suggest relegating these kinds of conversations to the principal as part of the principal's supervisory and administrative responsibilities. A number of respondents believe that any issues of concern, whether related to teacher performance or teacher attitudes, need to be directly handled by the supervisor (i.e., principal), an action that should not be delegated. This direction is contrary

to what Heller (2004) suggests: "[Teachers] need to take a much greater part in the collective control of the quality of their ranks" (p. 88), and further, in support of recognition and greater control by teachers, a recommendation that teachers' associations "stop shielding their weakest members and share in the task of policing their own ranks" (p. 88).

Negative attitudes are a factor where educational personnel do have absolute choice and control. All respondents possess firm beliefs about what they feel teachers need to be able to do and take responsibility for as professionals, and view colleagues who are unable or unwilling to accept these terms as impediments that divert energies at the school level from advances in supervision practices that encourage continuous, self-directed professional growth and responsibility for quality performance. Experiences of respondents reveal that teachers who are positive, self-reflective, and self-analytical, who demonstrate strong skills and a broad knowledge base for practice, and who have an intrinsic need for continual professional growth and excellence, are teachers who possess the confidence and security that allow them to be open to a variety of collaborative, professional experiences and collegial supervision practices. A few of the respondents expressed strong beliefs that teachers have a professional responsibility to demonstrate leadership in activities related to collaboration, professional growth, and quality performance, but their frustration

with colleagues who attempt to sabotage these professional efforts remains unresolved.

In discussing attitudes toward supervision practices, a common theme that arises in the findings is the desire of teachers for more frequent supervision and more frequent professional dialogue with their supervisor in a one-to-one relationship. This finding demonstrates continuing ties to traditional beliefs of a supervisor-subordinate relationship in contrast to a collegial, non-hierarchical one, and implies a supervision-evaluation link where supervision is a scheduled event or events, not an ongoing journey. Despite exposure to current organizational theory, involvement in the establishment of professional learning communities, and experiences in shared leadership, traditional boss-worker attitudes continue to exist; most respondents maintain this attitude and believe that their colleagues feel similarly. Regardless of a desire among teachers to be responsible and in control of their professional growth and performance, and to be viewed and treated as professionals, being overseen by a supervisor who provides feedback on performance and recommends areas for growth appears to be a desirable condition for fulfilling teacher expectations, as well as for promoting a sense of satisfaction and security within the supervision process. These perceptions are contrary to Beerens' (2002) belief that "competent educational professionals are always self-directed in their learning" (p. 25), and may challenge Heller's (2004) argument that teachers, as professionals, "should

be held to ever-higher levels of accountability" (p. 91). As cited earlier, Rosenholtz and Kyle (1984) suggest the link of teachers as professionals to what it means to be a professional (as cited in Speck, 1999, p. 111), but the question of what delineates a teacher as a professional is seldom addressed or comprehensively defined in educational literature. Teachers refer to themselves as professionals and expect to be viewed as professionals; yet, the findings suggest a general perception of lack of alignment between thought, understanding, and action of teachers as professionals, or of the ability to articulate the encompassing skills, knowledge, and attitudes of what it is to be a professional. Bolin's (1987) suggestion of a view of teaching "as a commitment or calling, a vocation ... that is not adequately contained in the term *professional* as it has come to be used" (as cited in Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, p. 205) may provide a clue to the crux of the issue, one worthy of further reflection.

Further discussion by respondents about teacher attitudes toward supervision exposes a theme of recognition as a factor in teacher motivation, a critical factor that influences teacher behaviours and attitudes in respect to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. References to recognition highlights praise, particularly from the principal, but includes acknowledgement in other formats, such as leadership opportunities and promotion. A number of scholars acknowledge that recognition is an important component that supports continuous improvement, commitment to

quality performance, and a collegial culture of professional growth (Blase & Kirby, 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; McEwan, 2003; Schmoker, 1996; Speck, 1999; Wheatley, 1994, as cited in Speck, 1999). Principals, as supervisors, often face the struggle of how to recognize the individual and collective efforts of teachers meaningfully, effectively, and fairly. Speck (1999) understands this challenge, recognizing that teachers are unique, with individual needs and beliefs about how they might be recognized professionally, and about what motivates them to further professional exploration (p. 62). Although praise is generally viewed as a desirable form of recognition, teachers can misinterpret it as "condescending and patronizing" (Blase & Kirby, 2000, p. 14), rather than as the intended expression of encouragement and compliment. "There is nothing more devastating to morale than phoney praise calculated to accomplish hidden agendas" (McEwan, 2003, p. 123). Deci and Ryan's (1984) study considered how extrinsic reward affected motivation and capacity, and concluded that extrinsic rewards "had negative effects on subsequent performance and creativity ... and resulted in a feeling of being controlled by them" (as cited in Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, p. 299); a similar caution is raised by Blase and Blase (1998, pp. 126 – 128). Praise as a form of extrinsic reward, then, appears to be a potentially undesirable practice. Whitaker (2003) argues a positive view of praise: "It is impossible to praise too much ... authentic praise is a powerful reinforcer and motivator" (p. 24). Similarly, Gabriel (2005) notes, "Teachers

want someone to recognize a great activity or lesson. They want to be noticed ... but be sure that your praise relates to [teachers'] performance" (p. 104 – 105). Schmoker (1996) agrees, and strongly encourages praise, public recognition, and celebration of teachers and teacher teams for meeting goals and for affirming that they "really do make a difference" (p. 104; pp. 105 - 107). Whitaker (2003) promotes the value of informal recognition to "consistently acknowledge that what [the] best teachers do is different and special" (p. 84), believing that this encourages these teachers to "redouble their efforts ... [and makes their jobs] more satisfying" (p. 84). Extending the debate, Blase and Kirby (2000) suggest that praise from the principal, as supervisor, could potentially undermine efforts to encourage desirable teacher leadership behaviours, such as recognizing their own and their colleagues' strengths and successes, so as to shift the "locus of control – the responsibility for praise ... from administrator to teachers" (p. 127). Although the shift of responsibility for praise as an indication of leadership behaviour is desirable, this would need to be supported by a shift in teacher thinking, as evidenced in the findings of this study, from a traditional boss-worker image to the collegial culture of a professional learning community. A further challenge to overcome in shifting responsibility for praise to teachers may be the challenge of professional jealousies. In suggesting professional jealousies, some respondents cite some teachers that resist sharing ideas for fear of losing credit for them, and explain how others often fear colleagues' potential

resentment if they are singled out for public recognition. This type of professional relationship suggests that the reality of practice hides ghosts of the past that continue to restrict advancement in establishing collegiality within professional learning communities as a norm in the school setting.

As celebrated and prestigious as public recognition may be (e.g., provincial Excellence in Teaching awards, district level recognition and award programs, or even simple, school-level recognition, such as acknowledgement at a staff meeting or in a staff bulletin), these actions may not achieve desired, motivational results, particularly when individual, rather than collective recognition, is encouraged. Actions that appear to put individuals on a pedestal can create difficulties in a culture that promotes collegial practices. Gabriel (2005) recognizes the reluctance of some principals to give praise to individual teachers at the risk of appearing unfair, and he adds a thoughtful point to the debate: "Treating everyone equally can sometimes be the most inequitable thing you can do ... It only becomes unfair when you are always recognizing the same person" (p. 116). He suggests that there are ways to ensure that all teachers receive praise and recognition, from colleagues as well as from the principal, and that these activities can serve as "valuable team-building and morale-building [activities], as well" (Gabriel, 2005, p. 116). Like supervision, the concepts of praise, which may or may not be desirable, and public recognition, which may or may not be desirable, continue to be fraught with conflicting

thinking and outcomes, exacerbating the difficulties that supervisors experience in supporting teacher motivation.

What motivates and inspires teachers to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance is a source of confusion and contradiction for supervisors, who are often at a loss of what to do or not do, when, and how much, to demonstrate support, acknowledgement, and encouragement to teachers while not igniting undesirable feelings and effects. Teachers' individual personalities, beliefs, experiences, and relationships make what is desirable as unique as the individuals that are served. Scholars recognize the diversity in how teachers teach and learn as a quality to be honoured and celebrated (Pajak, 2003, p. VIII); transferring this recognition to diversity in supervision practice appears to be a natural link. Respondents express acceptance of differences among teachers and appear strong in their individual beliefs; yet, several suggest common, district wide supervision practices, contrary to the direction proposed in the literature (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). As summarized in a quote by Tom Peters, "One size never fits all. One size fits one" (as cited in Littky & Grabelle, 2004, p. 74). Underlying principles appear to provide more direct links between the findings and the literature when considering ways to encourage teacher motivation. Both respondents and the literature highlight respect for the teacher as a prerequisite for teacher motivation. Respect for teachers may be observed in a variety of ways, including

providing choice and control for teachers (i.e., professional autonomy) and in demonstrating an absolute belief in teachers as competent professionals. With recognition of the individual needs and diversity of teachers, acknowledgement and praise for professional efforts most likely would help to demonstrate respect. Whitaker (2003) emphasizes the importance of the principal treating all individuals in the school setting with appropriate and professional respect at all times, as difficult as this might be in some situations (p. 22).

The literature, along with respondents' observations and experiences, generally identifies the critical role that the principal plays, as both administrator and supervisor, in the professional behaviours, actions, and outcomes of teachers, individually and collectively. Ultimately, inner drive and direction of teachers (i.e., intrinsic motivation) is the desirable state, without reliance on supervision by an authority that monitors for minimum competencies or outcomes, or on a prerequisite need for extrinsic recognition. Some respondents are cognizant of this, expressing admiration for colleagues who demonstrate an intrinsic need for learning and for excellence, those for whom teaching is a passion and a calling, and not merely a career label. Nonetheless, principals' attitudes, behaviours, and actions have substantial influence on professional growth, performance, and attitudes of teachers. Beyond basic respect for and belief in teachers as competent professionals, and a caring compassion for them as individuals, the opportunities and organizational structures that a principal

can orchestrate, as an educational leader, as a supervisor, and as a manager, do make a difference in how teachers respond to their responsibilities as professionals. It has long been accepted that teacher collaboration in their practice and in their learning enhances teacher motivation, satisfaction, commitment and efficacy (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, as cited by Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Pounder, 1999, as cited by Serviovanni & Starratt, 2002), and self-management, as do meaningful involvement and greater control in their work, and increased responsibility (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). Respondents identify some of these characteristics as important to them, but individual needs, beliefs, and perceptions surface in this discussion, too. Leadership style, school culture, and school climate also exert influence on motivation for continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Inferences made from the respondents' discussion of these factors link to supervision, and are confirmed by some scholars (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). Principal actions, such as encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice, to embrace collegiality, and to strive for excellence and improvement help to empower teachers, contribute to teachers' sense of efficacy (i.e., the belief in one's personal effectiveness and ability to produce outcomes), and facilitate supervisory experiences that are more positive than those that teachers may have experienced in the past. Respondents also include ensuring that learning and growth is occurring for teachers as an important responsibility for principals, as

instructional leaders and as supervisors, and they acknowledge the strong influence of a principal's modeling as a desirable action. Some respondents extend their thoughts on modeling to include the value of observing colleagues in action, a professional activity that is supported in the literature (Heller, 2004, p. 17). Modeling through involvement in ongoing professional development alongside teachers is promoted in the literature, both as a critical role within a professional learning community and as an action that helps to establish increased credibility of the principal in a supervisory role (Blase & Kirby, 2000; McEwan, 2003; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002;). Modeling further serves to facilitate a desirable school culture and school climate, effectively observed through frequent presence of the principal in classrooms and high visibility around the school. Frequent, informal visits to classrooms have further value in demonstrating caring, interest, and respect for the teaching and learning that is occurring in classrooms each day (Blase & Blase, 1998), and several respondents identify these classroom visits as a positive supervisory action that has a positive impact on student achievement. Most respondents express value for frequent classroom visits by the principal and high visibility around the school, along with accessibility, and note these as desirable and meaningful principal actions, with these actions being strongly encouraged in the literature (Elmore, 2000; Gimbel, 2003; Whitaker, 2003). High visibility and accessibility as forms of modeling by the principal, and modeling by colleagues promotes

improvement. As suggested in an observation made by Oliver Goldsmith (1728 – 1774), "People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy after" (as cited in Littky & Grabelle, 2005, p. 33). Although several respondents express appreciation for the time principals spend in their classrooms and a desire for more frequent principal presence, a common observation is that time in classrooms as an instructional leader is too easily undermined by the management and administrative responsibilities of a school principal, an observation that is acknowledged in the literature (McEwan, 2003). Similarly, Heller (2004) recognizes new and increased demands on principals as educational leaders, recommending revising positions for administrators whose primary responsibilities would focus on management (p. 9). Heller's (2004) work supports the concern identified by respondents, a concern of insufficient time for the principal to meet all the needs and responsibilities required in the school context. Time issues extend from the competing demands on a principal's time to the time that is needed for teachers to support, challenge, and learn from each other as professionals (Heller, 2004, p. 83). Lambert (2003) disputes time concerns, arguing that "time isn't really the issue.... The real issue is how we *decide to use* our time" (p. 76). This statement has particular relevance at the school level; clarifying what is important to educational personnel as professionals, such as reflective conversations and collegial work, makes finding time a necessary challenge. On the advice of Labovitz and Rosansky (1997),

"The main thing, is to keep the main thing, the main thing" (as cited in McEwan, 2003, p. 13)!

Along with often overwhelming and conflicting demands on a principal's time, several respondents identify teacher perceptions of conflicting roles of the principal and note how these influence the supervisory relationship. As discussed previously, respondents suggest that many colleagues hold fast to the view of principal as a hierarchical boss, confuse the distinct purposes of supervision and evaluation, and express negativity for supervision, generally based on their experiences. Establishing a trusting, collegial relationship with the principal appears to be difficult for some teachers when the different hats that a principal needs to wear are not recognized. It is critical that principals communicate openly to help teachers better understand their various roles, and that responsibilities are clearly articulated, particularly when the principal needs to don a hat of administrative capacity, such as when conducting evaluations for the purpose of personnel decisions (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002, p. 276). Issues of trust emerge as important, as are clear communication and the previously discussed, underlying principle of respect. Trust in the principal is a critical characteristic in the principal-teacher relationship; this quality frequently enters respondents' discussion and similarly, is often referred to in the literature (Blase & Blase, 1998; Gabriel, 2005; Heller, 2004; Speck, 1999). Gimbel (2003) identifies trust as a vague and problematic dilemma that is extremely difficult to

define and achieve, but that is essential to relationships and to school improvement (p. 4). She suggests that respect for teachers, offering praise and recognition, and high visibility and accessibility are actions and behaviours of the principal that can facilitate trust building (Gimbel, 2003, p. 54, pp. 68 - 71). Even a focus on accountability through a teacher evaluation system, as is the focus for Tucker and Stronge (2005), recognizes that improvements to the system are heavily reliant on trusting relationships between principals and teachers as they strive to uphold the delicate balance of teacher accountability and support (p. 53). This balance extends to encompass the broad context of supervision. Whether considering supervisory platforms, organizational requirements, or teacher or supervisor attitudes, skills, and actions, links between these and other critical components continue to challenge change in supervision practice.

Chapter Summary

The controversy and complexity surrounding the concept of supervision create great challenges for scholars and for practitioners at the school level. The findings of this study are often reflected and supported in the literature, although a few ideas and concepts would create argument. Despite calls in the literature for change in supervision for more than 30 years, and the apparent confidence of respondents as progressive, knowledgeable practitioners, the findings demonstrate that very little has changed in the reality of supervision practice in

the school context. A number of themes suggested by respondents create optimism, however, that educational personnel are nearing a place in their collective journey where they are ready and eager to attempt change in this area.

A highlight of the findings, strongly supported by the literature, is the ready connection made by a few respondents between supervision and professional growth. Reflective practices, collaboration, collegial activities, and continuous improvement of practice, individually and collectively, are actions that appear to be moving willing practitioners away from isolating norms of the past. A focus on student learning and achievement as the driver of continuous professional learning and improvement is another common thread between the findings and the literature. Factors related to the organizational culture (i.e., provincial, district, and school policies and related practices) clearly influence commitment to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. For the most part, the findings and the literature express similar thinking. One factor that the findings show disagreement with is in the value and commitment of educational personnel to professional growth plans, and this may limit advances in supervision practices that support a self-directed model. Although teacher choice and control over their learning and their work is clearly supported in the findings and in the literature as important factors for success in supervision practice as professional growth, the choice and control that is available for educational personnel within a self-directed professional growth

plan is not recognized in the findings. The definition of what it is to be a professional remains vague in the literature and among practitioners. Further, whether it is attitudes toward teachers as professionals or attitudes of teachers as professionals, this issue clearly influences motivation towards continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Negative attitudes and sabotaging efforts of some colleagues also remain a frustration for many respondents, with little in the literature to guide resolution of this issue. Attitudes of educational personnel appear a key to whether positive changes are in store for supervision practice or whether change in supervision remains stalled.

In conjunction with attitudes of educational personnel, behaviours and actions in practice are critical factors that support or impede continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. The findings and the literature clearly highlight school culture and school climate in affecting attitudes and in determining success of supervision initiatives, including the move toward collaborative, collegial, and reflective activities for continuous improvement and professional renewal. The effect of recognition and praise on teacher motivation for continuous growth and improvement, and for quality performance is a sensitive area defined in both the findings and the literature. Respect for teachers, trust in the principal, as supervisor and as administrator, and modeling of professional actions by principals and by colleagues are

identified in the findings and in the literature as prerequisite qualities of collegial relationships that encourage greater success in and more positive perceptions of the supervision experience. The findings reveal that respondents have few ideas for what it would take to initiate positive changes in supervision practice, but inferences can be made from professional activities they are involved in and express value for that they are more knowledgeable about current thinking and potential advances in supervision practice than they may realize. Nonetheless, evident in the findings and in the literature is that there is a lot of work to do to achieve consistent commitment to professional activities, such as those defined within the professional learning community model, before continuous professional growth and quality performance, as supervision, become self-directed as an individual and a collective responsibility. Initiating and implementing change that will move supervision practice successfully into the future remain a perplexing challenge for scholars and for educational personnel in the school context.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, Recommendations, Further Questions, and Personal Reflections

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the study. The second part of this chapter shares conclusions derived from the research findings. These are included under three major headings that categorize factors that have substantial influence on the commitment and success of school-based educational personnel in continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. The third part of this chapter shares recommendations for practice that emerge from conclusions drawn in this study, and questions for further reflection and research. Personal reflections that arose during participation in this study conclude this chapter.

Summary of the Study

Purpose and significance of the study. A number of research questions are addressed in this study, with the central purpose of this research being to explore teacher and principal (i.e., school-based practitioners) beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours related to supervision in search of insight to answer the question: What supervision practices promote commitment to continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among educational personnel in the school context? The intention of this study was to explore and to link theory and practice to help to improve understanding of educational supervision, and to

increase awareness of current supervision practices and desired outcomes. Further to this, the study intended to initiate thinking that might lead to changes in supervision policy and practice. Challenges encountered in the literature and in practice that affect change and advancement in the field of supervision enhance the context for this study.

Review of the literature. The literature provided grounding in historical and current thought in the area of supervision. The focus of the review was on the definition of educational supervision, and on beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of educational personnel that supported continuous professional growth and quality performance. Materials published within the past five to ten years received most attention. Focus topics were selected for their potential contribution to the research questions, and with the intention of broadening knowledge and perspective in relation to historical and current thinking about educational supervision.

Procedures used in the study. The study used a phenomenological approach combined with grounded theory analysis to explore the essence of supervision practices that would best support continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among educational personnel in the school context. The qualitative research design brings us closer to understanding confusing phenomena through rich description of supervision experiences shared by experienced principals and teachers currently serving in a

school context. Inferences and interpretations made from the responses obtained during semi-structured interviews, related follow-up, and review of relevant documentation honoured the perspectives of these school-based practitioners while confirming or constructing knowledge.

Summary of findings. Despite the unique and individual natures of teacher and principal respondents, and a preconceived understanding that educational supervision is a personal process, a number of commonalities in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours related to supervision and in expectations of supervision were noted in the findings. The findings identified a number of factors that have substantial influence on the commitment and success of school-based educational personnel in continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. These factors can be categorized under three major headings: (a) perceptions of supervision (i.e., continuing controversy about the definition of supervision and its primary purpose in the educational context, and continuing links between supervision and evaluation that fuel generally negative perceptions about supervision; (b) organization culture (i.e., provincial, district, and school site policies and practices); and (c) teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours as professionals and about supervision. Conclusions drawn from consideration of the research findings follow.

Conclusions

The following statements reflect inferences and conclusions drawn from consideration of the research findings.

Perceptions of supervision. As the study progressed, it became increasingly evident that educational supervision was an emotional arena for the respondents, and that the disagreement and confusion discussed in the literature was evident in their current realities. Clearly, perceptions of supervision have the power to promote or impede positive change in supervision practice for continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Concluding insights follow:

1. The definition of supervision, its purpose, and its outcomes continue to be confusing and elusive concepts in theory and in practice. It is apparent that supervision is in transition, but this same idea has been expressed for more than three decades, and we are no further ahead in understanding or in developing a more satisfactory supervision framework. Concerns about supervision are now coupled with changes in education in general and in growing demands that are inherent in the daily life of a school;

2. Historical ties to hierarchical relationships and to supervision as inspection are evident in our current reality. For more than 30 years, there has been almost no notable change in how supervision is perceived, practised, and experienced by educational personnel, and much of the current thinking in the

field suggests little more than marginal shifts in direction or revisions to practice;

3. Although definitions of supervision and evaluation identify distinct processes, confusion between supervision and evaluation continues to be a contributing factor in practitioners' disillusionment, dissatisfaction, and distrust of current supervision practices. Although definitions of the processes help to clearly distinguish the processes, practitioners often use the terms interchangeably and appear to have a preoccupation with a summative nature of supervision;

4. Although some teachers may have no issues with supervision and evaluation as supportive processes, concerns about how documentation is recorded, filed, and used, and by whom, are often raised; it is extremely difficult to overcome personal insecurities and baggage from negative supervisory experiences of the past;

5. There is evidence of movement from a focus on improving teachers to a focus on improving instructional practices for the ultimate goal of improving learning and achievement for students as the purpose of supervision that promotes continuous, self-directed professional growth for educational personnel;

6. Principals and teachers agree that supervision is necessary, and

generally that it supports accountability for a minimum standard of performance and continuing competence of educational practitioners; and

7. Negative experiences and perceptions about supervision persist among both teachers and principals, and provide evidence of disillusionment, dissatisfaction, and distrust with current practices in supervision, and an appetite for change.

Organizational culture. A second critical factor influencing positive change in educational supervision for ongoing, self-directed professional growth and quality performance is organizational culture (i.e., provincial, district, and school policies and related practices). Increasing appreciation for collaborative and collegial activities in the school environment became evident as respondents shared their current situations, and these actions have the potential to light the path for risk-taking by teachers and principals in exploring alternatives to traditional supervision practices. Concluding insights follow:

1. Principals and teachers welcome the move toward a collaborative culture, and toward collegial and reflective activities that support continuous, self-directed professional growth and renewal. There is growing interest in the professional learning community paradigm, although provincial and district policies have the potential to undermine positive changes in supervision due to their focus on practices that apply a traditional teacher-supervisor relationship to

supervision and that neglect the impact of collective practices and related responsibilities;

2. A collective commitment to a culture of professional development, professional relationships based on trust and respect, recognition of and value for teachers as competent professionals, continuous modeling of cultural expectations and of adult learning by colleagues and by supervisors, a complementary leadership style, and a positive school culture and climate are qualities that promote a sense of efficacy and motivation for continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance among educational personnel in the school context;

3. It is difficult for teachers to fully trust and accept principals as colleagues in relation to supervision activities, largely due to continuing views of principals as administrative authorities (i.e., bosses) responsible for supervision and evaluation *of* teachers, not *with* teachers (i.e., agents for quality control and judges of competency). It is likely that anyone in a position of power and with the authority to direct teachers would elicit a similar distance from teachers when attempting to engage in collegial work;

4. Teacher choice, control, and involvement, individually and collectively, in decisions that affect their learning, their work, and their performance (i.e., professional autonomy) are critical;

5. Persistent negative attitudes and general resistance of colleagues to

various initiatives are factors that continue to frustrate educational personnel in their quest for more positive supervision practices;

6. Disparities exist between the attention given to supervision activities at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels, with elementary teachers experiencing more direct and more frequent observations and contact with the principal, as the supervisor. In some instances, supervision activities at the upper levels might be described as haphazard, at best; and

7. It is generally accepted that teachers, like students, have individual needs and preferred styles of learning, and that teachers want and need different things from supervision. For this reason, a common supervision *process* would appear inappropriate. A supervision *framework* that sets general parameters based on policy, and that includes a range of possible activities and actions from which to choose would appear more appropriate if it ensured the honouring of teachers' needs as adult learners, and if it demonstrated respect for teachers as professionals and for teaching as a profession.

Teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours shadowed all actions related to educational supervision, serving to promote or impede positive practices and potential change in support of continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance. Whether based on perception, hearsay, or reality, teacher

and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours appear to hold the ultimate power in determining the future of educational supervision. Concluding insights follow:

1. A collective understanding and acceptance of what it is to be a professional has not yet been achieved among educational practitioners;

2. Whether it is attitudes *of* teachers as professionals or attitudes *toward* teachers as professionals that are fuelling negative perceptions about supervision and stalling positive change in this area remain unresolved questions;

3. Attitudes and receptiveness of teachers toward supervision, professional growth, and various collegial activities are critical to potential change in these areas within the context of supervision. Participation in collegial activities as an undesirable task, with a "get it over with so that we can get on with our work" attitude, does not hint at optimism for successful outcomes;

4. Attitudes of principals toward supervision, professional growth, and collegial activities are equally important to potential change in these areas. Principals, too, can hold traditional views and have perceptions coloured by their experiences, and they may experience uncertainty and lack of confidence in their role, may lack knowledge and skill in related areas, may feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities as educational leaders, or may be uncomfortable in reflective conversations or in sharing honest feedback.

Undoubtedly, attitudes of the principal, both positive and negative, will be reflected to some degree in the attitudes of teachers;

5. Respectful, trusting, and caring relationships between teachers, and between teachers and principals are paramount to success in collegial activities that support continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance;

6. Sufficient time and resources for professional development, including collegial activities, and time and energy for frequent principal presence in classrooms, accessibility, and high visibility around the school are factors that are desirable in support of positive supervision practice, but these factors create concern, and organizational and budget challenges in the school context. Further to time and resources are time and commitment of teachers, colleagues, and principals as colleagues to engage in effective, focused, and meaningful collegial activities for continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance;

7. Praise and public recognition for the efforts and successes of educational personnel are a controversial topic that remains unresolved in literature and in practice;

8. Teachers appear to be intuitively aware of the value of collegial

sharing and professional dialogue in improving their practice, but several have very limited experience with these professional activities and may discuss these kinds of actions as desirable "what ifs";

9. Despite experience and high levels of expertise, many seasoned teachers feel nervous and intimidated when being observed in action by colleagues or by principals, tend to feel defensive of their practice, and may hesitate to openly share challenges, especially with the principal;

10. There is evidence of lack of comprehensive knowledge and understanding of provincial and district policies in relation to teaching standards, educational supervision, professional growth, performance, and evaluation, most notably among teachers;

11. There is evidence that provincial and district policies on supervision and evaluation are often perceived by tradition and experiences in practice rather than on actual knowledge of educational personnel;

12. There is evidence of inconsistency in use of or recognition of the purpose and value of teacher professional growth plans; and

13. It is interesting, though troublesome, to note a general sense among teachers and principals that performance is at its best when the practitioner is being observed by a supervisor or by colleagues, even more so when the situation is a formal visit by someone in authority. Ideally, performance should always be at personal best to provide the best possible learning opportunities for

students and to satisfy high expectations of self. However, if more intense effort and concern for quality performance is experienced when being observed, this may indicate potential for positive implications for increased collegial observation or collegial coaching activities.

The conclusions drawn in this study confirm that little has changed in thinking and in practice, much like research findings in the area of supervision over the past three decades. Perhaps, the desperate search for solutions to the supervision dilemma should not be the place to begin in seeking change. Instead, a focus on those most directly affected by supervision issues, teachers and principals, and on how educational personnel are perceived by these practitioners, and by educational policy and decision makers may reveal the root of supervision issues and light the way to change. It would seem that the same issues will remain issues until basic assumptions of teachers as professionals are clarified and collectively accepted, until a traditional boss-worker mentality is relegated to the past, and until educational personnel, as professionals, collectively expect and accept responsibility for continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance.

The research findings and the conclusions I have drawn are limited by my ability to interpret the responses, experiences, and personal stories that participants in this study shared with me. It is my hope that those who read my

work are prompted to additional insights that honour their personal experiences, knowledge, and expertise.

Recommendations for Practice

The following statements reflect the inferences made from the research findings and provide recommendations for practice.

Perceptions of supervision. Educational supervision continues to be enveloped in confusion and disagreement in the literature and in the realities of practice. Generally negative impressions of supervision continue to impede potential advances in the field and stall positive change. Perceptions of supervision, particularly those of practitioners, hold a key to positive change in the field.

1. Historical influences on thinking, on practice, and on perceptions contribute to the struggle with change and improvement in the area of educational supervision. There is a need to openly acknowledge and discuss current dissatisfaction and disillusionment with supervision practices, and to critically analyze its historical influences to increase chances of success in developing meaningful practices that will help to move the field of supervision into the future;

2. There is a need to shed the predominant and traditional belief that supervision is required to ensure continuing competency and quality performance of teachers. Educational personnel, as professionals, should not

need to be overseen to help them to determine where growth is needed or to help them to determine their level of performance. By virtue of being professionals, educational personnel need to be in control of their professional destinies, without waiting to be guided and controlled by a supervisor, as their *boss*. The focus on accountability as an overriding purpose of supervision is no longer appropriate; and

3. The nature of the terms, supervision and evaluation, and the images they produce, may be the root of negative impressions about supervision among educational personnel. Until the ghosts of the past are dealt with, minds are unlikely to open to different ways of thinking or acting in relation to educational supervision, or to different forms of professional relationships that would embrace supervision as an umbrella for meaningful and welcome collaborative activities. Opportunities for open dialogue between educational policy makers, district administrative personnel, professional association leaders, and educational personnel in the school context, along with critical analysis of historical influences may help to dispel some of the distrust and resentment of supervision and evaluation held by practitioners, and might open doors to more positive actions and impressions.

Organizational culture. An array of promising opportunities and avenues for quality, growth-oriented collaborative experiences ignite enthusiasm and

optimism among practitioners. Embraced within the policies and practices that provide the framework for supervision, these activities clearly support continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance; organizational culture holds another key to positive change in educational supervision.

1. With the growing acceptance of improving learning and student achievement as the focus of supervision, and of commitment to collaboration, reflection, and collegial activities, it may no longer be desirable for the focus of supervision to be on the individual and on individual professional growth, when collective activities and responsibilities might be more appropriate (e.g., the Clinical Supervision model, with its focus on individuals, that continues to be widely used, including adaptations to the process);

2. It is important to recognize the power of historical influences on our current reality when addressing the urgent need to rethink supervision practice. However, this cannot limit openness to progressive activities that will help educational personnel move into the future by rehashing and re-researching the same questions and the same models that have been considered for over 30 years. Open debate, continuing research, and collection of evidence to support changes are important to addressing the complicated issues surrounding change in educational supervision;

3. Despite ongoing, urgent calls for change in beliefs, attitudes, and

practice, recommendations of previous research in the area of educational supervision are often ignored (i.e., by scholars, decision makers, and by practitioners) or are unknown to educational personnel, resulting in minimal discernable change in how supervision is practised or perceived in the current reality of schools. A well communicated initiative by decision makers to support changes in supervision practice, accompanied by an intense effort to help educational personnel to have access to and to understand current research and recommendations related to professional growth, professional roles and responsibilities, and quality performance through effective supervision would be a welcome beginning to change. Knowledge is a key to understanding, change, and success; increased emphasis on professional reading for principals and for teachers, and convenient access to current research are valuable forms of professional development;

4. The district in the study has included peer-coaching activities in its professional development for principals over five years and has been working to build leadership capacity among teachers. Targeted, long-term professional development of this nature helps to provide meaningful learning in support of collaborative activities focused on self-directed and collective reflection and continuous professional growth, and needs to continue;

5. Encouraging attitudes that accept change as a collective learning

opportunity that continually builds on knowledge and that recognizes small successes as steps toward a much bigger goal may help to improve chances of success in implementing change. Individual commitment to achieving goals of change is important, but collective commitment is more critical in supporting sustainable change;

5. A change in the emphasis of phrasing that identify provincial and district policies on supervision and evaluation, with accompanying changes in mandated actions and responsibilities, may help to make the process more palatable and inviting to practitioners, may assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities, and may encourage more positive impressions of and commitment to the processes. For example, a Policy on Professional Growth and Performance through Supervision and Evaluation, or a Policy on Professional Growth and Performance as separate to a Policy on Evaluation (i.e., as required for contract and promotion decisions, on request to support desired teacher transfers, or in response to unacceptable performance), and removing supervision from the context of educational practice may better align with current thinking while preserving links to defined standards and while recognizing the concepts as connected, but separate, entities;

7. Frequent presence of the principal in the classroom, accessibility, and high visibility as an instructional and educational leader are important to teachers, and are important to teaching and learning. Teachers recognize the

many competing demands on principals' time as school administrators and as managers. Perhaps it is time to critically review the nature and breadth of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship;

8. It is important that school-based educational personnel commit to keeping current, and to being aware of implications of current school reform initiatives and political agendas so that practitioners can make more valuable contributions to open debate on change in educational supervision;

9. A collaborative effort between post-secondary teacher education programs, school districts, schools, and the Teachers' Association has not yet been examined or utilized for its potential in reinforcing a model of teacher professionalism that promotes individual and collective responsibility for continuous, self-directed professional development and quality performance. At times, there is a sense among educational personnel that these groups are working in isolation, with a degree of protectiveness in what is perceived as separate areas of control. Educational leadership as a broad professional learning community could be better modeled through increased collaboration between these levels of educational organizations;

10. The Teachers' Association plays an important role in the attitudes and beliefs of its members. This organization could be instrumental in initiating dialogue and in helping to define what it means to be a professional. Further to this, the Teachers' Association has a role in promoting quality performance

through a stand against mediocrity, but is sometimes perceived to place priority on protecting its members despite questionable performance (i.e., Union versus Professional Association action); and

11. Educational policy makers, decision makers, and educational practitioners need to acknowledge and accept that there are no quick fixes or ready-made solutions for resolving the complicated issues surrounding educational supervision. Change in beliefs, attitudes, and actions takes time, and any changes to supervision as it is currently understood and practised will take time. As urgent as change to supervision practice may be, viewing change as a journey and not as a race may be a path to success; there is no map and no finish line.

Teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Issues of professionalism and collective responsibility cannot be ignored in the debate surrounding educational supervision. Teacher and principal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours are critical in defining actions that will lead educational supervision into the future.

1. There is a need for educational personnel to define and to collectively agree on what it is to be professional, to accept the responsibilities that being a professional entail, and to consistently demonstrate professional attitudes and behaviours as underlying principles for change in supervision practice (e.g.,

self-direction and motivation in setting and meeting goals, and in doing whatever needs to be done to ensure continuous professional growth and improvement, and quality performance);

2. Teachers need to accept greater responsibility for understanding the content and implications of relevant provincial policy, including the Teaching Quality Standard, and further, to accepting these standards as *minimum* requirements that all teachers must demonstrate;

3. The onus must be on teachers to accept responsibility for continuous professional growth and quality performance throughout their career (i.e., accountable to selves, as professionals). A shift is needed from the seeming dependency on receiving positive feedback as confirmation of quality performance or gentle suggestions for growth, specifically from the principal as supervisor and authority, to teachers, as self-directed and self-appraising professionals;

4. Emphasis on *educational* leadership by principals and by teachers as a collective responsibility, with an indisputable focus on improving learning and achievement for all students, may help to redefine respective roles and responsibilities in a way that supports change and improvement in supervision practice (i.e., in contrast to emphasis on instructional leadership by the principal, alone);

5. Educational supervision as an integral component of the

interrelationship between the focus on student learning and achievement, continuous professional growth, and quality performance (i.e., of teachers and of principals) has not yet become accepted by all school-based educational personnel, and how to garner consistent commitment to the process remains a perplexing challenge that needs to be openly addressed. Involvement of all practitioners may help to initiate improvement in educational supervision through a collective effort to shape a better reality; and

6. Educational personnel must be skilled in reflection, in critical self-analysis, in reflective questioning, and in providing quality feedback if they are to take responsibility for continuous professional growth and quality performance, and if they are to participate meaningfully in collective actions. As not all practitioners understand, or feel confident or comfortable in these skills, choice of quality learning opportunities need to be available.

Clearly, there is no quick fix to the ongoing frustrations and concerns related to supervision in the educational context and no apparent *right way*. Promising changes in how teachers work together as colleagues are beginning to take hold, largely due to shifting the focus of professional learning and performance to improving student learning and achievement from a focus on improving teachers and teaching. Educational professionals intuitively want what is best for students and will go to whatever lengths are needed to maximize

success for their students. In this way, teachers and principals continually reflect and strive to improve. Their goal is excellence, both in learning and in performance, and support is needed in accepting the elusiveness of this goal, in embracing excellence as an unending journey. Principals and teachers have or can develop the capacity and the will to serve collectively and collaboratively as educational leaders to inspire, encourage, and support this journey. Whether or not supervision is required or advisable in pursuing excellence through continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance remains a question without an answer.

Questions for Further Research

1. Do teachers have more positive feelings about supervision and do they experience greater motivation when they have choice about who they work with in supervisory activities that are focused on reflection, professional dialogue, research, and evidence of results (i.e., a teacher colleague, rather than the principal, in a "critical friend" relationship versus clinical supervision activities), and would working with the same colleague over several years improve the depth of reflection and the degree of honesty of professional dialogue, including formative feedback?

2. In what ways can schools be reorganized, and can teaching and

learning times be rescheduled from more traditional formats to provide additional time and resources for collaborative activities, particularly regular collegial observation and professional dialogue?

3. What impact might common teacher planning time and common teacher office workspace have on collaboration, on continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance, and ultimately, on student learning and achievement?

4. Does praise and recognition help to motivate educational personnel toward continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance, and if so, what forms of recognition are most effective and appropriate?

5. In what ways can educational policy makers, decision makers, and school-based practitioners work together to resolve concerns related to negative or resistant attitudes, or mediocre performance while honouring teacher choice and control over their work and continuous growth, addressing accountability issues, and while preserving a positive school climate, organizational culture, and professional relationships?

6. Attitudes and relationships are critical in a positive collegial environment. Is it possible for teachers and principals to develop collaborative relationships as they exist between teachers, and what impact does relatively frequent movement of principals and teachers between schools (e.g., less than 5

years at a school site) have on collaborative relationships, and on the qualities that support collaborative relationships?

7. Growth and sustainable change does not happen when individuals feel directed, coerced, or threatened, but rather when individuals feel inspired to grow and to change. (a) What is it that inspires educational professionals toward continuous growth; and (b) What is it that will inspire meaningful and sustainable change in educational supervision?

8. Is supervision of educational personnel, as professionals, necessary?

Personal Reflections

I am still learning. (Michelangelo)

Supervision, professional growth, and quality performance were special interests of mine through my years as a teacher that have intensified during my experiences as a principal. The constant questions and a belief that things could be better spurred me to Graduate work and to this study in a search for knowledge and understanding that might provide answers or direction that would help me to improve my practice and my work in leadership. My work, and my learning and reflection over the past few years are but the beginning of a journey that will continue throughout my career, one that I look forward to sharing with my colleagues.

I have the particular good fortune of working with extremely knowledgeable and highly professional colleagues who are passionate about teaching and learning, and who are willing to take thoughtful risks in their practice to improve learning and achievement for their students. These teachers are keen to participate in formal and informal collaborative activities, to share ideas and challenges, to model practices, to debate beliefs, and to learn together. They read, share, and engage in research and in professional dialogue that supports individual and collective reflection and learning. They hold themselves accountable for their performance and for their results with students. They do what needs to be done because they believe that it needs to be done, not because they fear being checked-up on. From each other, they absorb energy and motivation. As professionals, these teachers would deeply resent being supervised in the traditional sense of the practice, for they are self-directed and committed to continuous learning and professional growth, and to high expectations for their performance and for themselves as professionals. They require and appreciate the professional freedom to choose their own path and to mark their own journey. With these teachers, I enjoy a deeper collegial relationship than I have ever experienced between teachers and a principal, and my role as an educational leader is a shared one. A growing sense of collective leadership exists, where individuals inspire and are inspired by each other, where encouragement, support, and challenge are ever present, and where

continuous, self-directed professional growth and quality performance are accepted as "how we do things" in our school context. The experience could be termed, self-directed supervision for continuous professional growth and quality performance, but I have a sense that putting energy into defining the experience, particularly with any term that links it to policy (e.g., supervision), could cause smouldering resentments, distrust, and negative attitudes to resurface and undermine the work that has been accomplished. I believe that what these teachers and I are experiencing is not unique. In other situations, these actions are likely similarly viewed as just how things are done, and given little thought as to how they help to define professionalism or to exemplify desirable supervision practice. I believe, too, that not all teachers or all school contexts embrace or demonstrate the kinds of professional and collaborative attitudes and actions that are described above, and these are the voices that unfortunately are heard as questions and issues related to educational supervision continue to be rehashed.

My original intention in initiating this study was selfish, to a degree, with a desire to learn about a new and better model of supervision and to discover the secrets of being an exemplary educational supervisor. How telling that is of my career experiences, my knowledge, and my initial beliefs! During the course of this study, learning and deep reflection have guided many changes in my beliefs and actions as a principal and as a colleague. I have not discovered

a better model for supervision or secrets to being an exemplary supervisor, and I continue to seek answers to ongoing questions related to supervision, professional growth, quality performance, professionalism, and collaborative practices. Most surprising to me is my change in belief in that supervision is necessary (i.e., to ensure continuing professional growth and quality performance) to thinking that the term, supervision, and related, defined processes are actually serving to impede, rather than support, more positive beliefs, attitudes, and actions of educational personnel, and that these in themselves are factors that are stalling change.

In closing, I would like to share an analogy that plants seeds of direction for me as I consider how continuous, self-directed professional growth and responsibility for quality performance can take root as priorities in the face of continuing issues with supervision, and as I wonder what role principals and teacher colleagues might play in supporting changes in related beliefs, attitudes, and actions. These questions remind me of the relationship between a parent and a child who is ready and eager for change and new experiences in the world, as he knows it.

> As a parent of a child who is taking his first steps, you are there to encourage him to take a risk and to stretch his limits, to cheer him on, to anticipate and provide whatever supports he may need, and to provide many opportunities to practise and refine developing skills. You care

about him unconditionally. He trusts you. Very soon, he exerts the need to explore further and to expand his ever-growing repertoire of skills. You resist any urge to hover so that you can supervise and direct the process. Instead, you may share potential challenges, like the nearest staircase, and offer to model your success in navigating them. He will consider your ideas, but you accept his need to choose for himself whether to obey your cautions or to test the challenge for himself. He chooses the way that is the right way for him to learn. You believe in him and view him as capable of achieving success. He feels confident in being able to do what he has set out to do, an inner motivation soon pushes him to learn more things to improve his mobility, and before long, running and jumping are mastered. He knows that you will never be far away if he needs you. Sometimes, he seeks you out if an obstacle challenges him and he wants to explore a solution. He values your feedback, but tends to get annoyed if he feels directed, judged, or criticized. Often, you enjoy a walk together and he loves just having you beside him. You celebrate his growing skills and expertise. His independence and his self-confidence become his wings, and nothing will stop him now.

Although the circumstances are vastly different, educational professionals are eager for change in how they experience supervision, and they are ready to

continuous growth and quality performance. Supervision is in transition, as it has been for many years. First steps must be risked in effecting desired change in supervision practice, knowing that no path in a journey can be perfectly smooth and that tumbles are a certainty.

"If you keep doing what you've always done,

you'll keep getting what you've always gotten."

(Dr. Stephen Covey)

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Appendix

Pilot Study Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule: Part A

Demographic and Background Information

Dear (Name): Please complete this questionnaire prior to our scheduled interview. Attach a separate sheet, if necessary. Thank you for your assistance.

Part A: Demographic Information and Background

1. Name: _____
2. Total number of years teaching experience: _____
3. Total number of years administrative experience (if applicable): _____
4. District, provincial and school level committees served on in the last two years:

5. Schools worked at as a regular staff member:

6. Description of current school context (e.g., student enrolment, administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff, school programs, school instructional focus):

7. Description of current classroom teaching assignment (if applicable):

8. Professional development activities undertaken in current school year (please separate list into individual P.D. and school-wide P.D.):

9. Professional development activities undertaken in previous school year (please separate list into individual P.D. and school-wide P.D.):

10. Administrative position(s) responsible for educational staff supervision in current school:

11. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated in providing relevant school documentation, if available (e.g., your school's plan regarding personnel supervision or performance appraisal processes, supervisory data collection and feedback instruments, school educational/budget plan, school staff and student handbooks).

Interview Schedule: Part B

Interview

Cluster 1. Dialogue will focus on the meaning of supervision and how it contributes to high quality performance.

(a) What does the phrase "supervision of educational personnel in the school context" mean to you?

(b) Do you believe supervision of educational personnel is necessary? Why or why not?

(c) How do you feel educational personnel want to be supervised? Need to be supervised?

(d) What do you think educational personnel would view as an "ideal" model of supervision?

Cluster 2. Dialogue will explore teacher motivation and commitment toward continuous, self-directed professional growth, as well as toward preparation of their annual Teacher Professional Growth Plan.

(a) Describe how you monitor your performance.

(b) What supervisory behaviors and actions do you feel enhance your performance? Detract from your performance?

(c) Describe how you went about developing your Teacher Professional Growth Plan this year.

(d) What role do you have in your professional growth? In the professional growth of your colleagues? In the professional growth of your administrator or supervisor (if applicable)?

Cluster 3. Dialogue will consider supervision in the context of supervisor characteristics and common practices.

(a) Describe how you feel about the supervision you have experienced in your career. Most satisfying experience? Least satisfying experience?

(b) What are your perceptions about how your colleagues feel about the supervision they receive or have received?

(c) How do you feel educational personnel want to be supervised? Need to be supervised?

(d) Do you feel a common supervision process should be used with all teachers in all schools? Please elaborate and explain your response.

(e) Describe your relationship with your current supervisor. With previous supervisors?

(f) What supervisory behaviors and actions do you feel support your professional growth? Inhibit your professional growth?

(g) What do you feel are the strengths of the supervision process in your school? The weaknesses?

Cluster 4. Dialogue will investigate district and school policy issues, and cultural influences on supervision.

(a) What conditions do you feel enhance your/your supervisor's effectiveness? Inhibit effectiveness?

(b) What conditions do you feel enhance the effectiveness of the supervision process in your school? Inhibit the effectiveness?

(c) What do you feel are the strengths of the supervision policy of the district? The weaknesses?

Other. Respondents will be invited to elaborate beyond the scope of the interview schedule, and to share personal insights and other relevant ideas at the end of the interview.