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SCHOOL CULTURE AND CHANGE:
THE PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS PRACTICUM PROJECT

BY

ELIZABETH LOUISE TAMS

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "School Culture and Change: The Partnership Schools Practicum Project" submitted by ELIZABETH LOUISE TAMS in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

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Abstract

The Partnership Schools Practicum Project (PSPP) was established by the University of Alberta as an alternative to the existing practicum model. Its innovation was based upon the belief that school-based settings that encourage risk-taking and collaboration can play a role in the development of the reflective practitioner. Because the PSPP model is significantly different from the traditional practicum, the project's impact at the school level warranted scrutiny. The focus of this research, to describe one staff's approach to the PSPP and to develop an understanding of why they took that approach, was conceived to reflect the participants' own perspectives, involvements, and understandings of the PSPP. Birch School, one of the PSPP schools, agreed to participate in the study.

The literature on educational change and school culture provided a basis from which to observe the change process and to understand the impact of the school's culture on the PSPP as it was implemented at Birch School. The research focus necessitated a qualitative research methodology, with interviews and participant observations as the primary data sources. An inductive analysis methodology was used to allow pertinent information to emerge from the data.

It was found that the presence of the PSPP precipitated new organizational structures, processes, and roles for the PSPP stakeholders and the practicum participants: The school principal's role in implementing change and

facilitating the practicum was enhanced, and the student and cooperating teachers experienced a variety of professional development opportunities. Of significance were findings regarding the context of the school setting, beliefs about learning upon which the PSPP was organized, and the processes that the staff employed during the PSPP's implementation. The nature of the change process at Birch and the critical features of the school's culture carry implications for the project's expansion to other school sites and of the necessity for continued research into this kind of project.

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The members of the PSPP research team also deserve special recognition and thanks. It was because of the support and encouragement of these friends and colleagues that the research process and the development of this thesis became a personally and professionally rewarding experience.

Additionally, sincere appreciation is extended to the staff of Birch School for their willing participation in the research, to the Education faculty members associated with the PSPP for their cooperation and assistance during the study, and to the Edmonton Public School Board for affording me the opportunity to pursue this research during a sabbatical leave.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Research Problem

Introduction

The Field Experiences Office of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta has the responsibility for the placement of Education students in practicum programs. In 1989, as a result of initiatives by key figures at both the University and the Edmonton Separate School Board, the Partnership Schools Practicum Project was launched as an alternative to the existing practicum program. It was conceived as an innovative approach to the socialization of new teachers into the profession, with its innovation based upon pertinent findings from research on school culture, reflective practice, leadership, and shared working knowledge.

The Partnership Schools Practicum Project (PSPP) was established as a risk-taking, future-looking, and collaborative endeavour. The perceptions and premises that prompted the project included the belief that both student teachers and cooperating teachers have been operating in isolation and that educational stakeholders can benefit from the establishment of meaningful links between the school and the University.

The organization of the project may parallel what Goodlad (1975) envisioned as a symbiotic relationship between two institutions through which each might derive

mutual benefit. He discusses the relationship between school improvement and improved pre-service education in terms of networks:

> The need to create these team settings where beginning teachers secure a proper internship or residency is itself a stimulus to changing the regularities of schooling, a venture in which a school and a school of education might profitably join. In the process, the normally sharp juncture between pre-service and in-service education is blurred. (p. 189)

Underlying the establishment of the Partnership Schools Practicum Project were beliefs about the nature of the links that could be formed between the school and the University, and the concept of team settings.

Several features of the Partnership Schools Practicum Project distinguished it from past practicum programs. A cluster of student teachers was assigned to the school, with the school staff, as a group, accepting responsibility for them. The principal's role in the practicum experience was enhanced, as he or she assumed the role typically filled by the faculty consultant and provided leadership for staff development activities involving cooperating and student teachers. Three members of the Faculty of Education worked with the school, as new working relationships between the University and the three project schools were explored. From this structure, the University sought to provide school-based experiences that would develop proficient and reflective teachers.

It appears, then, that the practicum pilot project, with its emphasis on group organization and staff

development, has been modelled less upon the autonomous model of the traditional cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship, and more upon a collegial model; a model, supported by norms of collaboration and interaction, that would tend to support school improvement and change (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989). It seemed that the PSPP, as a school-based innovation, would be shaped by both the culture of the school setting and the manner in which the practicum was actualized by the school staff. Thus, the actual impact of the PSPP at the school level warranted further scrutiny.

As the Practicum Schools Partnership Project was implemented, it became apparent that a greater understanding was required of (a) the nature of the approach that a school staff might take to adapt to such a change in the practicum program model, and (b) the reasons why such an approach would be taken. The adaptation processes initiated by the presence of the PSPP could be described in terms of the staff's actual practices and would ultimately provide insight into the beliefs, assumptions, and understandings that prompted those practices.

The first year of the project saw one school involved, with two more schools joining the project in the following year. Because it was anticipated that more schools would join the PSPP in the future, a detailed description of the context within which the project took place was necessary to provide a basis from which the program's continuation and expansion could be explored. In recognition of the stimulus

provided by the PSPP to change the regularities of schooling (Goodlad, 1975) through a collaborative model, this research examined the implementation of the Partnership Schools Practicum Project in one of the participating schools.

Purpose of the Study

The central focus of the research was to describe one staff's approach to the Partnership Schools Practicum Project and to develop an understanding of why they took that approach.

Several questions of an exploratory nature provided parameters for the collection and analysis of data. They were as follows:

1. What was the nature of the certificated staff's involvement during the course of the Project?
2. What was the nature of individual teacher involvement during the course of the Project?
3. What were the factors and influences that prompted those types of involvements?
4. What were the consequences of those involvements for individual teachers and the school?

The research problem and questions were conceived and formulated so that the research could reflect the participants' own perspectives, involvements, and understandings of the PSPP.

Significance of the Problem

By initiating the Partnership Schools Practicum Project, the University has acted upon the assumptions that alternative practicum experiences may prove beneficial to students and cooperating teachers alike and that the responsibility for training potential teachers can be shared. In welcoming the project at the school site, the district and school administration appeared to accept that this innovation and change had the potential to positively affect school staff, student teachers, and the school. As new kinds of partnership links were both envisioned and formed, potential benefits of the PSPP could be seen for the educational system as a whole. Clearly these suppositions needed to be addressed.

The results of this research will benefit a number of stakeholders. First, it is anticipated that this research study will provide timely and relevant information for the participating school staff regarding the actual implementation of the PSPP project and, more generally, provide information about the school's propensity for improvement and change.

As well, implications for the project's future direction may become apparent to a second group of beneficiaries. It has been found that the success of change efforts is determined by the adaptive and developmental processes that occur during implementation and that when expanding a program to other sites, similar processes need

to be repeated to ensure the success of the project (McLaughlin, 1976). A description of the PSPP's implementation at one school will provide valuable information to school districts and the University regarding the form that the project's successful implementation might take at other school locations.

Finally, broader implications regarding the establishment of collaborative networks and partnership projects between educational institutions, including the University and the school system, may be drawn. It is possible that an articulate description of the approach taken to implement a collaborative partnership model, such as the PSPP, will contribute to a greater understanding of the conditions needed to create schools that are centers for inquiry, improvement, and change.

Limitations

This research was limited to the extent that the staff's understandings, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as the adaptive processes and activities, were made visible to the researcher, and to the extent that the researcher was able to observe, interpret, and articulate them. Every attempt was made to observe pertinent planning meetings and staff activities during the data collection period, with the realization that attendance at all such sessions was not possible.

Delimitations

The research limited its focus to one of the three project school sites and its instructional staff, with the selection of the school predetermined by its participation in the project. While the involvements of all certificated staff at the school site were of interest, those staff members who were specifically involved in PSPP activities were more often the focus of observations and dialogue. Decisions about which staff members to interview, as well as which activities to observe, were made as necessary during the course of the research in order to address the problem statement as fully as possible.

Assumptions

Underlying this study were several assumptions. It was thought that:

1. The presence of the Partnership Schools Practicum Project would have an effect on individuals and the staff at the research site.
2. Individuals and the staff would be adapting to the presence of the project.
3. Factors such as staff norms, beliefs, attitudes and understandings might influence the way in which the staff approached the PSPP.
4. These same factors might be influenced by the PSPP.
5. The certificated staff would provide data in an open and honest manner.

Summary

As educators, we are in the business of change, for to us change means growth. When the Field Experiences Office at the University of Alberta embarked upon a new practicum project, it was apparent that changes were being made that would affect more than just those student teachers who were participating in the venture. The Partnership Schools Practicum Project (PSPP), as an innovative program designed to provide meaningful links between the University and participating schools, would also prompt changes and growth within the schools. Similarly, the nature of the schools' involvement and participation in the PSPP would shape and direct the form that the PSPP would take both at this stage and in future years.

It was from this perspective and with a focus on change, that the research problem was formed: to describe one staff's approach to the Partnership Schools Practicum Project and to develop an understanding of why they took that approach. Even as the focus has been on the experiences and growth of one particular school staff, it is anticipated that this study can make a contribution to the growth of meaningful practice in the broader educational sphere. Yet the conceptualization of this thesis and the opportunity to make such a contribution must be preceded by, and is contingent upon, an understanding of the body of knowledge as it is articulated in the literature on school culture and change.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Related Literature

Introduction

Change is paradoxically one of the constants in education. Classroom teachers promote growth in their students, school staffs formulate goals and implement plans to increase their school's effectiveness, and across the country educational stakeholders debate the process of school improvement and reform as they envision a re-structured school system. Whether it is growth, improvement, or restructuring that is discussed, at the heart of the matter is the concept of change. At the same time, there is a recognition that the way that change is approached, the nature of the change process, and the eventual outcomes of change efforts will be affected by the culture of the classroom, school, or school system.

Because of the abundance and range of literature that relates to change in the educational arena, and because the focus in this thesis is on a change that was implemented within a distinct school culture, this literature review limits its focus to educational change at the school level. From this perspective, the current literature and research on the factors, influences, and conditions needed to effect school-level change are specifically considered. The review of the literature, then, emphasizes the effect that the local school context or culture has on the change process

and establishes a basis from which to consider the approach that one school staff took as they implemented a new practicum model. To do this, it is necessary to consider more fully what the concepts of educational change and school culture mean.

Educational Change

The Nature of Educational Change

Educational change is the outcome of purpose and process, but it can be interpreted in a variety of ways. If one thinks of change from the organic or evolutionary perspective, as with the progression through the life cycle, change can be considered as growth. "Change as growth implies that there is a purpose and direction and that change is inevitable" (Cuban, 1988, p. 91). In this view, change occurs in increments, and it is equated with improvement. When the metaphor is extended to the field of education, change, growth, and improvement become synonymous: As terms used to describe educational reform efforts, they are often interchanged so that school improvement is equated with educational change.

At the same time, it can be argued that not all change is progress. Things that are different are not necessarily better, and the field of education is rich with examples of educational changes or innovations that did not result in school improvement. Fullan (1982) says that "the nature of educational . . . change must be understood in terms of its

sources and purposes" (p. 13). He feels it is a given that change will occur; of more interest is "why people in education decide to push for or promote particular changes" (p. 13).

Cuban (1988) notes that educational changes can be made by those in economic or social power which "may be viewed as calculated efforts to . . . design and impose a schooling that will shape children's beliefs, values and behaviour in directions appropriate to social needs as defined by those in power" (p. 92). In this sense, educational changes are not seen as improvements, but as impositions of the powerful over the weak. Or it may be that educational changes that involve new organizational structures, strategies, and teaching methods can be considered as neither improvements or impositions, but as responses or adaptations that enable schools to cope with problems. Cuban notes that, depending on the value orientation of those who conceptualize and observe change in schools, viewpoints about whether the change is improvement, imposition, or adaptation can be quite different. To determine the appropriateness of educational innovations and change, Fullan (1982) advises that three points should be kept in mind: (a) who benefits from the change, (b) whether the change is feasible and sound, and (c) whether it actually results in changes in practice. At the same time, needed changes can be ignored, through what Fullan calls a "bias of neglect."

The personal dimension of change. The nature of change involves a personal dimension as well as the systemic dimension of the organizational, social, and political environment. This dimension encompasses the cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements of each individual within the system, and it is a dimension that needs to be examined when implementing change (Hopkins, 1984). Change, at an individual level, means different things to different people.

Fullan (1982) says that there is a subjective meaning of change for participants and that changes that appear to be rational may not be when the realities of the participants' situations are considered. For teachers involved in change, the abstract goals of the change may seem ambiguous, and their feelings about the ultimate benefits of the change may be overshadowed by the actual practices that they need to employ to implement the change. Fullan feels that "the extent to which proposals for change are defined according to only one person's or one group's reality . . . is the extent to which they will encounter problems in implementation" (p. 29).

The objective reality of change is that change is a multidimensional construct that includes the interrelationship of (a) pedagogical beliefs, (b) teaching approaches, and (c) materials and resources. Because of this multidimensionality, Fullan (1982) notes that the meaning of change can vary within and among

individuals: As the three dimensions interact, they need to be made meaningful to the people who are involved in the change. Fullan also cautions us that at stake in educational change are people's beliefs and conceptions about themselves, their competence, and their roles in change. Clearly, when initiating and implementing change, the meaning of the change for groups of stakeholders, as well as for individuals within those groups, needs to be considered. The meaning of the change and the stakeholders' roles in the change are also affected by the type of change that is proposed.

Types of Educational Changes

It has been noted that educational changes should be "subjected to fundamental questions about their relationship to the basic purposes and outcomes of schools - - a task made no easier but all the more necessary by the fact that the goals of education in contemporary society and the best means of achieving them are simply not clear or agreed upon" (Fullan, 1982, p. 22-23). Despite this dilemma, educational change is inevitable and can typically be distinguished as being one of two types, known as first- and second-order change (Cuban, 1988).

First-order change. First-order changes are those that "are intentional efforts to enhance existing arrangements while correcting deficiencies in policies and practices" (Cuban, p. 93). In first-order changes, educational changes

are made to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of the existing system. The existing arrangements fall into three broad categories wherein educational changes can be made to: (a) the hardware, which consists of equipment or materials, (b) the software, such as the range and content of the curriculum, and (c) interpersonal relations, which involves roles, behaviours and relationships (Morrish, 1976). Each of these categories interacts with the others so that change in any one area affects the other two. In first-order changes, the organizational structures and features, and the roles of those in the schools are not significantly altered, although it is possible that a process of adaptation will be involved.

Second-order change. Second-order changes are those that try to "alter the fundamental ways that organizations are put together because of major dissatisfaction with present arrangements" (Cuban, 1988, p. 93). New organizational structures, roles, and goals are considered, as novel solutions to problems are sought. For example, the beliefs that a school staff holds about children and how they learn may prompt changes in the way that the school and the classrooms are organized for instruction, or beliefs about the kinds of experiences that student teachers need may prompt Universities and schools to create alternative structures for practicum experiences.

Typically, attempts to reform or change schools have sought first-order changes. Rather than look for new

structures and roles, changes are made to the existing structures in attempts to strengthen them. Cuban, however, proposes that before making educational changes, the problem should be reframed. This means asking what it is about the school setting that discourages the use of the particular strategies that are desired or, as in the case of a partnership project, where a University selects a particular school to implement a changed practicum model, what it is about the school's culture that enables it to support the innovation. Instead of getting teachers to change routine behaviors to implement new strategies, the power of the organizational setting, cultural norms, and the teacher's beliefs systems should first be considered. If the problem is re-conceptualized, second-order changes may be sought. Ultimately, educational change of either type becomes a process.

The Process of Educational Change

The process of planned educational change has been described as occurring within three broad phases or stages typically labelled adoption, implementation, and continuation (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976; Fullan, 1982). This schema demarcates a process that is not as simple or as linear as the labels would represent; at all stages are factors and conditions that increase the complexity of the change process and create an overlap and interplay between the stages. Fullan says that "the single most important

idea arising from [this kind of overview] is that change is a process, not an event" (p. 41). This point should be kept in mind as the stages of educational change are delineated.

Adoption. The first phase includes the process that leads to the adoption or initiation of the proposed change. During this stage, the decision to adopt a particular innovation is affected by a number of factors which can increase the likelihood of adoption (Fullan, 1982). These include: (a) the advocacy and support of central administrators, consultants, change agents, governing bodies and teachers; (b) the innovation's potential to solve an existing problem or fulfill a need; (c) the quality of the innovation; and (d) an availability of information about the innovation. With the presence of any combination of these factors, an innovation may be adopted; a "good" idea may be advocated by a number of stakeholders, legitimatized through policy and provided support through financial backing and the presence of change facilitators. It is at this stage that

> the direction or content of change is set in motion. Decisions are made about what is to change, at least in terms of goals and sometimes substance. The process of adoption can generate meaning or confusion, commitment or alienation, or simply ignorance on the part of participants and others to be affected by the change. (Fullan, p. 53)

Implementation. The second phase, called implementation, is when the change is in its initial use and the first experiences at putting the change into practice occur. There is no guarantee that the adoption of an

innovation will lead to meaningful change for at this stage of the change process the presence of a number of conditions and factors again affects the outcome of efforts.

First, the implementation of change is affected by the nature of the change and the reasons for its adoption. Berman and McLaughlin (1976) found that opportunistic changes (such as those that took advantage of available funds but lacked commitment from the stakeholders) were not successfully implemented; changes that were prompted by identified needs, with a problem-solving orientation, were most likely to be supported. Fullan notes that in addition to the need for the change, the clarity, complexity and practicality of the change are also factors that affect implementation.

As well, this stage is affected by the characteristics of the school district (which includes the administrative support, the staff development processes, and the time-line for change) and the school (where characteristics of the principal and teachers, and staff relations come into play). These contextual factors, which influence how a staff implements school-level changes, are discussed in greater detail in this chapter where the link between school culture and the change process is explored.

Continuation. The final stage, called continuation, incorporation, or institutionalization, is when the change is either built into the system or disappears through conscious choice or attrition (Fullan, 1982). This stage is

affected by the same factors that affected implementation; the characteristics of the change itself and those of the school district, the school, and external supports.

Thus, the change process involves three stages and several factors that affect the course taken at each of those stages. It must be reemphasized, however, that the change process is complex, and that for change to occur, the nature of the change and what the change means for both the system and for individuals within it, must be considered. Change is not a rational and linear process, and planned change strategies that ignore this fact may face difficulty when attempting to initiate, implement, and incorporate desired changes.

Planned Change

In the past, schools have been on the receiving end of school improvement efforts. Yet planned change strategies often did not consider the effects of the local setting: They provided schools with "teacher-proof" materials to implement. For example, the research and development model (Havelock et al., 1973) was a rational and logical approach to change. It was assumed that with careful research and development of an innovation, successful diffusion at the local setting would logically result. Practitioners, who might be reluctant in the early stages, could be brought "on-side" with explanations of the innovation's benefits, then provided with the necessary training to implement the

change. Such efforts did not take into account what the objective and subjective meaning of the change was for individuals or look at the systemic changes that would need to take place within the context of the local setting. Not surprisingly, the innovations often fell short of their intended goals.

During the early 1970's, the federal government of the United States funded a number of change efforts directed at improving the quality of schooling and commissioned the RAND Corporation to study those change efforts. These findings have provided a great deal of information regarding the effects of the local setting on change efforts and the direction that successful change strategies might take.

Mutual adaptation. It was found that the successful implementation of planned educational change typically involves a developmental process called mutual adaptation whereby the project's goal or design is adapted to suit the local setting and its needs (McLaughlin, 1976). Teachers participate in adaptive planning, they develop materials at the school level, and they attend staff development sessions. Through these practices, teachers are then able to implement new programs and strategies that they may have played little or no part in initiating. At the school level, the successful implementation of change depends on the on-going processes and strategies used by teachers as collaborative planners, problem-solvers, and decision-makers (McLaughlin, 1976; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978).

Change is supported by teacher-participation in adaptive processes and by the leadership of the principal at the project's setting. Berman and McLaughlin (1976) found that an organizational climate that promotes change is typified by the active support and leadership of the administration, a finding that has been well documented (Fullan, 1982; Hall & Guzman, 1984; Hall & Hord, 1987; Haughey & Rowley, 1991; Leithwood, Stanley & Montgomery, 1983; Sergiovanni, 1984). The principal's commitment to, and support of, an innovation is crucial for its successful implementation: Similarly, his or her understanding of, and active involvement in, the change process is a determinant of the staff's approach to incorporating change. Like the principal, those involved in change efforts that are successful tend to exhibit high levels of morale and commitment.

High levels of commitment are needed, because as Hopkins (1984) observes, change is difficult to achieve, and the degree of difficulty increases as the complexity of the change increases. With more complex changes, there are more people to be coordinated, and the assumptions and norms that are held by these people may need to be changed. Hopkins also observes that in successful change efforts, the object of change itself changes. This is borne out by the concept of mutual adaptation where the nature of the change is shaped by the local setting. In this pro-adaptation view, "identical innovations assume different characteristics in

different settings. . . . The innovation itself changes to meet the unique set of circumstances within the school, and the school changes as a result of the intervention" (Hopkins, 1984, p. 14). Even as the innovation has an impact on the school, it is the staff's approach to the change which determines its nature.

Change systems. The school changes as a result of planned change efforts, yet there are certain systemic characteristics within the school setting that can foster change. Hopkins (1984) notes that

> the healthy, positive and growthful interactions needed for effective change, in-service, curriculum development and implementation can only occur within systems or subsystems which have high productivity, high quality of life and an organizational capacity to solve their own problems. This means that the systemic properties of the school are of paramount importance in any self-improvement effort as they determine the quality of life therein. (pp. 14-15)

Schlechty (1990) feels that school systems need to create systems to change systems. For change to occur, five functions must be fulfilled: (a) the change must be conceptualized, (b) people who will be called upon to support the change must be made aware of it, (c) feedback from those who will have to support it should be solicited and if possible incorporated, (d) activity to implement the change must begin, and (e) a system of ongoing support and training must be provided for those who must support the change.

Rather than just support the change, Barth (1990) advocates the creation of a "community of leaders" whereby

teachers play an active role in the workings of the school. He suggests that the principal can foster this by articulating goals, relinquishing authority to teachers, involving teachers before decisions are made, keying in on the right people for responsibilities, sharing the responsibility for failure, ensuring that success reflects on the teacher, and by being a psychologically secure person. This model of shared leadership, with its opportunities for interaction and constructive decision-making, addresses the individual's role in change and provides teachers with ways to improve schools from within.

In support of shared or participatory leadership, Schlechty (1990) says that:

> a pattern of participatory leadership is so commonly found in organizations where there is a strong culture and a definite commitment to a clear purpose and a common vision. Participatory leadership creates conditions in which ideas in their most compelling form can flow up and down the organization. (p. 50)

By changing the way that the system looks at individuals, the system itself, as a distinct culture, develops a capacity and propensity for change.

School Culture

Culture has been defined as "a system of shared values and beliefs that interact with an organization's people, organizational structures, and control systems to produce behavioral norms" (Owens, 1987, p. 165). The school as a distinct culture, with shared goals and values and a common vision, is a concept that has gained particular prominence

in the last decade, but it was no less apparent in Selznick's (1957) description of an organization as a social system that can "infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand" (p. 17). Distinctive aims and values are institutionalized, individuals operate from an understanding of shared meaning, and group values are formed that define the "commitments of the organization and give it a distinctive identity" (Selznick, p. 16). As the identity of the institution develops, values, beliefs, and norms of behaviour become important for their own sake.

From this early recognition of the importance to an organization of certain kinds of group values and norms of behaviour, a more recent perspective on organizational culture can be considered:

> the contemporary study of organizational culture may be best understood as a continuation of the main line of organizational sociology, which has always focused on the normative bases and the shared understandings that through subtle and complex expression, regulate social life in organizations. (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1988, p. 224)

Organizational culture is concerned with how people develop values and beliefs, and how these values and beliefs then influence behaviour; goals are achieved by socializing individuals to the organization's values (Owens, 1987).

The organization as a culture is a metaphor that frames one's thinking about the organization's operation (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs & Thurston, 1987). Sergiovanni et al. feel that organizational culture is an emerging view that deals with loosely coupled systems within

which are tightly structured central zones of beliefs and core ideas that govern peoples' actions. "Cultural cement" is constructed from norms, beliefs, and values, and it can bond an organization to goal commitment. There is a concern for the larger community, and symbols represent the group's distinctive, relevant, and tacitly understood meanings.

Bolman and Deal (1984) agree that a symbolic approach allows one to understand complex organizations such as schools that have unclear goals and uncertain technologies: Things that happen within organizations make sense if viewed in terms of the organization's symbols, and for events that are ambiguous and uncertain, there is a greater affinity for symbolism. Within schools, there is a constant interplay of beliefs, activities, and outcomes but:

> organizational structure and processes . . . serve as myths, rituals, and ceremonies that promote cohesion inside organizations and bond organizations to their environment. (Bolman & Deal, p. 188)

Schools are complex and constantly changing, so rituals provide predictability, and myths suggest something to believe in.

The culture of the organization is shaped by its participants, particularly by its leaders. Sergiovanni discusses cultural leadership wherein "cultural life . . . is constructed reality, and leaders play a key role in building this reality" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 9). The organization is constructed from shared meanings that take shape because of the actions of the organization's leader.

The leader's presence within the school's culture goes beyond the political and managerial realm, and the normative rather than the manipulative ability of the leader to embody and shape the values of the school is recognized. With cultural leadership, there is a focus on "culture-building."

Thus, it is apparent that a school can share beliefs and values that have been shaped by its leadership. Together the beliefs and values that are held influence certain kinds of behaviours which become the norm for the members of that organization. New members are socialized into the organization, and individuals are bound as a group by their common approach to problems and by their commitment to the attainment of the organization's goals. The rituals and symbols of the organization are visible reminders that the school is a distinct culture.

School Culture and Educational Change

Increasingly schools are faced with demands for change and have been on the receiving end of school improvement efforts; however, "many potentially powerful educational reforms have floundered because little attention was given to the organizational context in which they were to occur. Any change has to be considered against the culture in which it intervenes" (Hopkins, 1984, p. 15). The meaning of the change and the nature of the change process must be considered against the backdrop of the school as a distinct culture. Such has not always been the case.

Aoki (198 , states that the problem with most planned change strategies is that "to date in the field of education the dominant social theory has been guided by an instrumental notion of reason which impoverishes us by submerging or denying the meaning of cultural reality" (p. 109). Sarason (1982), too, notes that change efforts in schools have so often failed because those who wish to change schools do "not have an understanding of the school culture adequate to his or her efforts to change some aspect of it" (p. 33). It is proposed that change efforts must account for the culture of the setting. Indeed, "for a theory to be practical it has to have been formulated as a consequence of systematic efforts to understand and change the setting" (Sarason, p. 33).

With the recognition that the culture of the school setting affects the nature of change efforts, there has been a corresponding attempt by a number of researchers to articulate the characteristics of school cultures that are most likely to support innovation. These characteristics are visible in the beliefs that are held by the staff and in the norms of behaviour that the staff exhibit during change.

Cultures That Support Change

It is apparent that certain characteristics within a school's culture can support innovation and change. Morrish (1976) found that innovative institutions tend to have focused goals, distortion-free communication processes, and

inter-dependent relationships which exhibit an equalization of power. Resources are utilized so participants can contribute to the organization while growing, learning, and developing, and there is a cohesiveness to the social structure and organizational climate that enables members to both influence and be influenced by the organization. A psychological climate of freedom and safety exists that stresses interpersonal norms of trust and openness, and effective problem-solving mechanisms are in place. The organization is autonomous in that it acts from its own centre, yet it is adaptable and in realistic contact with its surroundings; innovativeness is apparent as the system has the structure to grow, develop, and change. Corbett, Dawson and Firestone (1984) studied the context of the school during change and, like Morrish, they found that innovative behaviour was affected by the school's existing goals and priorities, the availability of resources and incentives, and by the administrative practices.

Within this context, particular norms of behaviour that foster change have been delineated. Little's (1982) study of school culture found that more successful schools consistently tend to support norms of collegiality and experimentation. These norms, exhibited through the critical practices of the staff, include efforts to design curriculum and improve instruction and to provide support for mutual observation and discussion of classroom practices. As well, participants in successful schools are

characteristically able to initiate and participate in changes regardless of their role and status, they share a common language and approach that is developed over time, and they are openly confident of each other's social or role competence. Thus, the successful implementation of change is likely to be achieved in settings that support collaborative staff practices.

Similarly, Schiffer (1980) emphasizes that certain attitudes and norms inherent to the school's culture can support change. There must be collaboration (to share decision-making), flexibility (because the system needs to adapt while the change is unfolding), and experimentation (which is supported by all so that the system cannot revert to the status quo). There must also be roles and responsibilities (worked in a collaborative fashion), rewards (such as release time and opportunities to present materials), and new structures (such as committees and councils for decision-making and conflict management).

Schools that support change are those that support risk-taking so that teachers can examine their own practices. Wideen and Andrews (1984) feel that a climate for experimentation should be fostered by a leader who understands the changes that the staff are working on and provides positive and active endorsement of those changes. Wideen and Andrews indicate that change or the improvement of practice depends upon the leadership within the school, outside support and expertise, an availability of time and

resources, an appreciation of the complexity of the task and of the need to change perceptions, and the presence of professional development activities to learn about the nature of the innovation or change.

When all of the contextual factors and characteristics are pieced together, a picture emerges of the type of school culture that can support innovation. It is clear that change can be fostered in settings where the participants are focused (on goals and responsibilities), interactive (to make decisions, communicate and solve problems), supported (by time, resources, rewards, expertise, and a democratic and committed leader), and secure (to allow for flexibility and experimentation). It is of interest to note that characteristics of the school context are not always considered to be the main determinants of successful change efforts. Hall and Hord (1987) note that, while the context of the change is important, it does not have to be the driving force. They feel that some change facilitators are more effective than others at accomplishing their objectives within similar contexts, so of greater importance are the skills of the change facilitator and the change facilitating team. However, it must be pointed out that the actions of those change facilitators, as they work within schools with individuals and groups, may in fact be altering norms of behaviour so that the context of the setting becomes different as a result of their efforts.

Schools that support change efforts most effectively are those that exhibit specific norms of behaviour within their culture that give the organization the capacity to change and develop. For schools that do not possess such a capacity, the processes of organizational and staff development can significantly alter the way in which the organization and its members function.

Organizational development. Change is a process, so to enable organizations to initiate and implement change more effectively the development of process skills may be required. Runkel and Schmuck (1984) recommend the use of organizational development (OD) to bring about sustained organizational change in schools. Typically an OD consultant will work with group members to help make changes in norms, procedures, the organizational structure, and interpersonal skills.

The processes that an OD strategy might focus on include communication, goal-setting, conflict management, problem-solving (through continuous cycles for identifying, analyzing, and acting), and decision-making (by dispersing influence throughout the organization to ensure commitment). As well, group procedures for task productivity and group maintenance can be addressed.

Runkel and Schmuck (1984) explain that there are several meta-skills through which the school can assess its development of the skill areas. These meta-skills include: (a) "Diagnosis" or a formative evaluation where the

participants gather information and determine whether they are doing what they say they are doing,
(b) "gathering information and other resources" to plan courses of action and to solve problems, and
(c) "mobilizing synergistic action," whereby the group rather than individuals acts on plans that have been made. Finally, by monitoring the first three meta-skills the school is able to sustain its capacity for solving problems. The school is aware of its problem-processing capacity: It continually asks if as a group they are moving themselves in directions in which they want to go. They examine their plans, goals and actions, and are able to describe the school's own norms, structures, and procedures; they are both building and articulating their school's culture.

After having gone through a process of OD, Runkel and Schmuck (1984) feel that the school is left with the organizational capacity to solve problems. There is:

> a strongly cohesive group in which members share understandings of their purposes, norms, skill and resources, in which those understandings are both explicit and intuitive and in which every member confidently expects other members to act so as to support his or her own acts--such a group can achieve results that cannot be achieved by individuals directed from above. (Runkel & Schmuck, p. 158)

It could be said that the organization has developed a culture of shared understandings and norms of behaviours and that with this capacity, it is better able to assess and implement change.

Staff development. It is clear that norms within a school's culture can support innovation and change, and that a school's culture might exhibit a propensity for change or be altered to one which embraces change. To this end staff development may focus on developing norms of collegiality and continuous improvement. Orlich (1989) suggests that there is a need to involve as many participants as possible in determining the focus of school-based staff development. He considers shared decision-making and collaboration to be prerequisites for school improvement efforts that promote change.

Schiffer (1980) outlines a model for staff development that can lead to change in schools. This staff development process (which bears some similarity to Runkel and Schmuck's OD meta-skills) begins with "self-study" in which the staff discloses information about existing values and practices. An important assumption made at this stage is that:

> Successful change is most likely to be achieved when superordinate goals are congruous with the values, needs, aims, and expectations of those who will implement or be affected by the change, and with other regularities in the school and its environment. (p. 166)

Stage two is one of "exploration" during which time shared meanings and consensual goals are developed by the staff. During the next, "planning stage" the steps are analyzed, objectives are laid out and action plans are formulated. Finally, "implementation" begins; the goals are fulfilled

through experiences and support to facilitate the evolution of a new future condition.

Barth (1990) feels that the greatest untapped opportunities for staff development and growth are within the school where the principal can act as a catalyst for teacher growth. This is in contrast to what he calls the deficiency approach, where teachers are given workshops so that they can learn new skills. According to Barth, staff development is a group growth approach, rather than an individualized approach. In his view, there are three groups of teachers within schools, and staff development needs to focus on the first two groups which include: (a) teachers who are unwilling to examine their practices or to have others examine them, and (b) teachers who are willing to reflect and make use of their insights to make periodic changes but are not comfortable with examination by others. According to Barth, there is only a small number of teachers who critically scrutinize their practice and are willing to have others do so as well. Because this third group is the desired group, staff development efforts should attempt to move teachers to this stage.

Lieberman and Rosenholtz (1987) emphasize the link between organizational change, staff development and school improvement; they feel that to change schools, one must change the schools' cultures.

> Modeling collegiality and legitimating working on curriculum and teaching together rather than in isolation, changes a school from one where teachers and

> principals turn inward to one where teachers and principals reach outward; collective action becomes the norm. "My problem" is changed to "our problem." (p. 89)

Like the community of leaders that Barth described, the principal and teachers together define goals and purposes, then assume the responsibility to utilize resources, time, and assistance as they take collective action. Change takes place at the school-level, prompted by the actions of the staff.

The School As the Center for Change

In planned change efforts the school has typically been targeted for change, but it has been proposed that schools can appropriately be the source from which change arises. In this scenario, the contextual factors that influence change efforts, the culture of the school, and the processes of organizational and staff development together contribute to the creation of centers where inquiry and reflection can lead to on-going change and renewal.

The underlying question, then, is not what should we get teachers and principals to do and how can we get them to know and do it, but rather "under what conditions will principal and student and teacher become serious, committed, sustained, life-long, cooperative learners?" (Barth, 1990, p. 45). Barth proposes the development of a community of learners which works from four assumptions that lead to certain kinds of practices. These assumptions include:

> Schools have the capacity to improve themselves if the conditions are right. A major responsibility of those

> outside the schools is to help provide these conditions for those inside.
>
> When the need and purpose are there, when the conditions are right, adults and students alike learn, and each energizes and contributes to the learning of the other.
>
> What needs to be improved about schools is their culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences.
>
> School improvement is an effort to determine and provide, from without and within, conditions under which the adults and youngsters who inhabit schools will promote and sustain learning among themselves. (Barth, 1990, p. 45)

In this scenario, the principal becomes head learner and is engaged in "experiencing, displaying, modeling and celebrating what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do" (Barth, p. 46). Teachers engage in continuous inquiry about teaching, and both adults and children pose their own questions, help each other and enlist each others' support.

Henshaw, Wilson and Morefield (1987) also feel that schools, and the people within them, have the capacity and desire to make changes and improve schools. They do not agree with the idea that school people resist change but suggest that change proposals need to relate to what school people know, can express and understand best. They, too, emphasize the importance of the school's culture and its relationship to change:

> Schools and the people in them constitute distinctive cultures and each culture requires a self-sustaining sense of balance, of equilibrium. New knowledge and methods may enter these cultures, but setting the conditions for interpreting them, developing the skills to use them, finding and then judging their values, and

> assuming responsibilities for the consequences of applying them are all cultural perogatives of school people. (p. 137)

Maintaining the school's equilibrium while meeting the challenge of change then becomes another challenge. "How does a school, as an educable entity, respond to the challenges of change while maintaining its equilibrium, that is, while continuing to exhibit a characteristic, reconcilable, satisfaction-sharing culture?" (Henshaw et al., p. 138).

Within schools there is both a formal text, which is a description of what people involved in the change are supposed to be doing, and a "guiding text," which refers to the informal account of the actual events that most of the participants are experiencing as the change is implemented (Henshaw et al., 1987). Problems can arise when these do not match and the guiding text is not recognized; change efforts need to utilize the guiding text to utilize the abilities or perceptual tools of those in the school. This can happen through planning and critical inquiry within the school where everyone in the school is a change agent.

Henshaw et al. feel that the process of critical inquiry can lead to a nexus for change which is an interaction of six dimensions: (a) values, goals, and felt needs; (b) the learning processes and conditions; (c) the organizational structures; (d) plans for experiences to address goals; (e) teaching and actions addressing the needs, understandings, and skills of others; and (f) sources

of new knowledge, techniques, skills, and materials. The intersection of many factors leads to change: The multidimensional nature of change (Fullan) can be more fully addressed from this transdisciplinary viewpoint.

There is a need, then, to create a renewing culture in which the school is the unit for improvement (Heckman, 1987). Teachers working together must make their beliefs explicit, then those beliefs can be examined and new practices launched. Norms of inquiry must be created and the school must relate to the outside world to be open to new ideas. Heckman notes that there will be conflicts as old and new concepts struggle, and he stresses that it is here that the principal's role is vital. He believes that new cultural norms will arise as individuals seek to renew themselves and the school.

Sirotnik (1989), too, suggests that the emphasis should be placed on the school as the center from which critical reflection and inquiry arises. In his view, the school should be the source of change rather than the target for change. Reflective inquiry, dialogue, decision-making and action-taking can take place at the school level.

The "Autonomous School." To summarize and synthesize this discussion of school culture and change, it may be useful to consider a construct of the ideal school climate called the "Autonomous School." This construct was created by Schmuck (1984) and it is based upon the results of his empirical findings and actual observations of schools. He

feels that this construct is important because those involved in school improvement efforts need a goal to work towards; as a construct, it highlights the essential features of a renewing school culture that supports growth and change.

The "Autonomous School" construct is one of a cooperative school culture, and it is characterized by norms that support collaboration and confrontation, or what Schmuck calls productive interdependence. Open and free-flowing communication is encouraged, as is risk-taking to find new ways to solve problems. Teachers assume flexible roles as learners and they share power. The staff is involved in self-analytic diagnoses of the school's performance and a continuous process of self-reflective monitoring is in place. The students are an integral part of the school's culture and the relationships between students and teachers are emphasized. The end result is that students in this school are committed and involved. In its approach to change, Schmuck (1984) says that:

> The Autonomous School possesses a supportive, affective climate in which the educators and the students work together to adopt or to reject educational innovations. As such, the Autonomous School can be said to be creative as a social system and to possess the capacity to solve its own problems. (p. 31)

Partnerships for change. Schools do not operate in isolation, though, and it has been proposed that broad partnerships can be formed to address the shared goals of enhancing teaching and learning. Goodlad (1984) calls for

the establishment of partnerships as part of a collaborative network that attempts to:

> (1) improve the quality and general effectiveness of existing institutions; (2) to develop an understanding of education as a communitywide rather than only a school-based activity; and (3) to develop new configurations of educational institutions including both the traditional ones and those of the media, business and industry, and cultural agencies. (p. 354)

Barth emphasizes the need for partnerships between the University and the school, saying that "educators outside the schools can search out and provide conditions that will make the improvement of schools likely by those who reside within them" (p. 121). With fresh thinking, the university and the school "can become members of the same community of learners and leaders" (Barth, 1990, p. 121) as the "symbiotic relationship" (Goodlad, 1975) between the university and the school is forged.

Summary

Where does this linking of change and school culture lead? Ultimately, it has been seen that a renewing school culture is a prerequisite for school improvement, development, and change. In the past, schools were on the receiving end of school improvement efforts: Planned change strategies ignored the effects of the local setting and provided schools with "teacher-proof" materials to implement. Such efforts often fell short of their intended

goals, for the nature of change is such that it involves personal meaning for individual participants.

Change is not an event but a process that has often been delineated by three phases known as adoption, implementation, and continuation. At all stages of this process, there is an interplay of factors and conditions which affects the course that the change effort takes.

Typically, the successful implementation of planned educational change involves a developmental process called mutual adaptation whereby the project's goals or design are adapted to suit the local setting and its needs. Teachers participate in adaptive planning, they develop materials at the school level, and they attend staff development sessions. The personal meaning of change is addressed at the school level: The successful implementation of change depends on the on-going processes and strategies used by teachers as collaborative planners, problem-solvers, and decision-makers and is supported by the active leadership and commitment of the principal.

As distinct cultures, organizations hold common values and beliefs so that tacitly understood norms of behaviour are displayed by its members. At the same time, there are specific characteristics within a school's culture that can support change initiatives. Ultimately, the successful implementation of change is likely to be achieved in settings where the participants are focused (on goals and responsibilities), interactive (to make decisions,

communicate and solve problems), supported (by time, resources, rewards, expertise, and a democratic and committed leader), and secure (to allow for flexibility and experimentation). It could be said that a school with these characteristics possesses an inherent propensity and capacity for change.

Increasingly schools are faced with demands for change and a school's culture may be altered, through adaptive processes and organizational development, to one which embraces change. Staff development may focus on developing norms of collegiality, experimentation and continuous improvement, and on developing a system of participatory leadership. It has also been suggested that, as an alternative to having the school on the receiving end of school improvement efforts, the emphasis should be placed on the school as the center from which critical reflection and inquiry arises. In this view, schools would be the source of change, rather than the targets for change. Reflective inquiry, dialogue, decision-making, and action-taking would take place at the school level, within communities of learners and leaders. At the same time, school-based change, to enhance teaching and learning, might share in the accumulated wisdom of the larger community and be supported by partnership links.

It is clear, then, that meaningful change at the school level is typified by adaptation, collaboration, inquiry, and committed leadership, and that it can be supported by

partnership links. This review of the literature, which links school culture and the change process, provides a basis for interpreting the approach that was taken to facilitate the PSPP's implementation at the local school site. The processes of the staff, the context of the setting, the leadership within the school, and the link with the University all became factors in a change strategy that was initiated outside of the school but was dependent upon the culture of the school as a source of reflective inquiry and action-taking to make the PSPP a reality.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design

Because this research was undertaken with the intention of gaining an understanding of the participants' experiences from their own frames of reference and within their own context, a qualitative research approach was utilized. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) outline five characteristics of qualitative research, noting that individual studies will, to various degrees, exhibit each of these traits. This study was no exception.

Typically in qualitative research, data collection takes place in a natural setting. The researcher is the key instrument in data collection and his or her insight is the instrument of analysis. "Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with context. They feel that action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). A second characteristic is that qualitative research is descriptive; details are important clues to understanding what is being studied, so nothing is taken for granted. Thirdly, an understanding of the process (rather than the outcomes) through which people negotiate meaning in their day to day lives is of prime concern. Characteristically, too, data are analyzed inductively so that the picture reveals itself and a grounded theory

results. Finally, the participants' own perspectives are the medium through which meaning is understood; because of this, those perspectives need to be captured accurately.

The qualitative approach, with its emphasis on describing people, places and conversations, was an open-ended and natural way to explore the complexities of the research problem. Data were collected within the natural setting of Birch school and an emphasis was placed on both (a) describing the actual staff practices and processes that occurred during the course of the PSPP and on (b) gaining an understanding of the factors and influences that might have prompted those involvements. By approaching the research from an interpretivist perspective, it was anticipated that the important issues and themes would reveal themselves during the collection and analysis of data and provide a basis from which to understand both why the events occurred as they did and what this meant to the participants in the research.

Research Methodology

Gaining Access and Sample Selection

Because of the collaborative nature of the practicum project and because of the University's desire to utilize a team approach to explore various facets of the PSPP, contacts with the school had been previously initiated by University faculty members. Several months before the practicum, the entire research component of the project was

outlined at a planning meeting which involved University faculty members, the research team, and teacher and administrative representatives of the three participating schools. At this meeting, the specific research projects, including this one, were introduced by individual members of the research team to all of the PSPP participants.

Six weeks later, the members of the research team toured Birch and the other two participating schools, and at this time arrangements were made to introduce this particular project to the certificated staff of Birch School and to solicit their support. Six weeks prior to the actual practicum, Kelly, the principal of Birch School, formally introduced the PSPP to the staff, and there was an opportunity to explain the nature of the research problem to the teachers and to attend to the ethical requirements of conducting the research.

The participants. The research problem specifically considered the approach that one school staff took to the PSPP. This focus on the certificated staff at one school site constituted a small, nonrepresentative sample. Within this sample was Kelly, the school principal, who participated in many of the observed activities and was often available for informal dialogue. All certificated staff members, individually and collectively, were participants in the research, but because it appeared that cooperating teachers were more involved in the PSPP activities than were other staff members without student

teachers, the cooperating teachers were more extensively observed and interviewed.

Other stakeholders. The implementation of the PSPP also involved the school's student teachers as well as faculty members from the University who provided links with the school. As participants in the PSPP, they were affected by the decisions made and the approach taken by the principal and staff of Birch school. Thus, even though they were not the focus of the research, as participants at the school setting they became part of the context within which the research was conducted.

Data Collection

In keeping with the characteristics of qualitative research, the primary data collection methods were participant observations and interviews. It was felt that observations of and discussions with the staff would best indicate how the staff were approaching the PSPP and why they would proceed in such a fashion.

Data collection extended over a five month period and included several PSPP planning meetings, although the collection of data during the two months of the PSPP practicum was both more frequent and exhaustive than at other times during those five months.

Observations. Observations, recorded in descriptive field notes, were made during PSPP planning sessions, both on and off the school site. Further observations, which

focused on the practices of the staff as they adapted to the PSPP, were made at the school site during the course of the student practicum period. These observations were made at staff meetings, inservices, small group meetings and professional development sessions, and during less formal group interactions such as staffroom discussions. Pertinent meetings and activities with PSPP facilitators, the school staff and student teachers were observed. Attendance at such sessions was not inclusive, but representative of all of the activities that occurred during the research period. Typically during the observations, there was an opportunity to talk with the participants on an informal basis.

After each observation, field notes were prepared that indicated the context of the situation and what had actually occurred. Where possible, informal interactions and the participants' own words were noted. Personal reflections and perceptions about the observations were recorded in a logbook which enabled focuses for subsequent observations to be considered.

Interviews. The school principal was interviewed during the pre-practicum period and at the conclusion of the practicum. As well, two staff members were formally interviewed at the conclusion of the practicum. The interviews of these selected staff members utilized a semi-structured format with open-ended questions to accommodate probing of pertinent areas, such as the impact and facilitation of the project on and by the staff. The nature

of the individual's and staff's approach to the PSPP was probed by asking about the kinds of involvement that occurred during implementation. The reasons for the specific involvements and the impact and effects of the PSPP on the participants were explored.

All of the interviews were taped and transcribed, and interview transcripts were then reviewed by the participants to ensure that the intent of their comments was accurately conveyed. Taken with the observations, the interviews provided data from which to derive meaning about what the staff did during the PSPP and why they proceeded in such a fashion.

Group debriefing sessions. At the conclusion of the practicum, the student teachers, cooperating teachers, and administrators were involved in debriefing sessions organized by the University. At their particular session, each group of participants was asked to reflect upon their experiences within the PSPP and to consider which features of the PSPP had been most significant for them. Members of the research team recorded all of the responses and dialogue from these sessions, and detailed field notes of the Birch cooperating teacher's and student teacher's small group meetings were compiled specifically for this research. As well, at the administrators' debriefing session, Kelly's comments regarding Birch School's and her own role within the PSPP were particularly noted.

Data Analysis

While keeping the problem statement and research questions in mind, an inductive analysis methodology was used to allow pertinent information to emerge from the data. Field notes were read several times on several occasions before they were analyzed and coded into potential themes and categories. Individual sentences and paragraphs within each set of field notes were subject to scrutiny: Ideas, phrases and descriptions were categorized and re-categorized, then transferred to appropriate files on the computer. The computer print-outs were then subject to further review. From this content analysis, a framework of meaningful categories and themes was formed.

The data, as coded and categorized, provided insight into the nature of individual and staff involvements during the PSPP, while several underlying themes seemed to suggest the factors and influences that had prompted those involvements and the day to day practices of the staff. On-going reflection and monitoring of the PSPP by the participants was also evident, and the consequences of the involvements for the staff became apparent during the post-practicum interviews. As well, fieldnotes from the debriefing sessions held for student teachers, cooperating teachers and school administrators were subject to the same process of content analysis as outlined above.

Data Trustworthiness

Every attempt has been made to ensure that the research is credible and free of researcher bias. By obtaining sufficient data that were descriptive of a number of events, comparisons between contexts have been possible. As well, by collecting data over a period of several months and by considering them within the context of previous and on-going research, it was possible to gain a broad or thick description of the staff's approach to the PSPP. Some of the preliminary findings were shared with the participants to ensure that the interpretations were accurate and that they represented the participants' understandings of the situations. The credibility of the emerging themes was established through a process of peer review and debriefing, and all referential materials and data have been retained to allow for dependability audits. During the research period, a personal logbook was kept to maintain an awareness of personal perceptions and to avoid introducing bias into the research.

Ethical Considerations

During an initial meeting with the school principal, and at a subsequent school staff meeting, the purpose and the methodology of the research were explained, the nature of the staff's anticipated involvement was outlined, and questions were answered about the research and the participants' involvement in it. It was explained that

participation was voluntary and that withdrawal from any or all parts of the study could occur at any time. A copy of the research proposal was provided to the principal, who gave permission for the research, on behalf of the school.

Because the PSPP involves specific schools, the University, and individuals that could be readily known to the interested public, the ethical considerations were of uppermost concern. Individual participants have been provided their anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and by the judicious wording of direct quotations where it might be revealing of individuals' identities. At the same time, information about the school and the participants has been treated confidentially, balanced by the needs of the other members of the research team to discuss the perceptions that were being formed. The research group has access to the data, which are securely stored. To protect the participants as much as possible, the opportunity has been afforded to participants to review materials that have been or will be published or presented.

It was a privilege to have been given access to Birch School, and by conducting the research in an ethical manner, an attempt has been made to repay the trust that was shown by Kelly and the Birch teachers. It is hoped that the findings reported in the following chapters will prove especially meaningful to these participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings: The Context and the Content of the Change

The School Context

One of the underlying principles held by the University as it initiated the PSPP was that "field experiences should be school-based rather than classroom-based; selected schools should foster reflection, collegiality and experimentation." Within these school-based settings, the practicum experience would ideally develop teachers who "share the norms of collegiality and experimentation" and are "reflective as well as proficient." That a particular school's culture might be conducive to fostering certain norms of behaviour was borne out by the manner in which the Birch staff implemented the PSPP. This description of Birch School is but a prelude to the practicum experience as orchestrated by Birch's principal and staff.

Birch School

One arrives at Birch School via a circuitous route through a newer subdivision on the edge of the city. Long before the school is approached, the brick clock tower, reminiscent of schools gone by yet architecturally modern, beckons, saying that the path being followed is the right one. Upon entering through the glass-block entryway into the spacious foyer/library area bright with student art, this impression is confirmed.

Birch School is organized and utilized in ways that reflect the school's belief that (a) all children can learn, (b) each student is a unique individual, (c) students must experience challenge and success, (d) learning involves the development of the individual, (e) learning is an active process, and (f) learning is an individual process. Approximately 470 students in combined year groupings (year one/two, three/four and five/six) are housed in the six year old school. They are provided programming by 28 certificated staff members, with Kelly as the school's full-time school administrator and Chris as half-time curriculum coordinator and half-time year 1/2 teacher. The school attempts to keep the class sizes small (they range between 20 to 24 students) to make practical the multi-age groupings, a thematically organized curriculum, a program of continuous student progress, and the student-directed learning that the staff believes in. Through these practices, the staff attempts to meet individual needs. Kelly says that the school needs to provide a supportive environment where individuals can grow.

Kelly emphasizes that she, Chris and the other staff members are working as a team, saying, "We talked about being a team, we use the word team a lot and I wanted that to be real, not just the words." At various times, leadership is provided by any number of individuals working in different curriculum and resource areas. Specific teachers give leadership reports at staff meetings: One

teacher might tell the staff about the half a day each week when she is available to assist with individual teachers' professional development and needs, and another might explain the science discovery zones which are placed strategically around the school for students of all ages to explore. The staff organizes what Kelly calls "bonding activities," such as a recent box social, and "culture-building activities," where the staff might work on developing personal creeds.

Just off the foyer, in the school's general office and reception area, one finds the "office team." Working with Kelly and Chris, this group is relied upon to maintain the office's efficient operation and to welcome the more than four hundred visitors that the school might receive in a year. To keep abreast of the maintenance of such a well-utilized space, Kelly and Chris meet weekly with the custodial staff to discuss priority items and lend support. Kelly summarizes: "So we work as a whole team. We try to work in pockets as well and still have that team feeling."

The library area is where the students and staff gather three times each week to demonstrate and celebrate learning. Diverse topics are shared, from a display of Teaching-Learning-Group 10's three- dimensional terrain projects to the Kindergarten's recitation of a dinosaur poem. Students, sitting on the carpeted "stramps" are a quiet and appreciative audience; the staff's efforts to teach "pro-active social skills" are rewarded by the students' quiet,

focused attention and polite applause. Another time one might find small groups of year 3/4 students working here as they develop their research skills. Their learning experiences have been cooperatively planned and facilitated by the teacher-librarian, the classroom teacher and her student teacher. One senses that the theme of working as a team includes both teachers and students. The team expands further, to include parents who assist with class projects, such as a Kindergarten cookie baking lesson and participate in demonstrations of student learning and growth at regular intervals during the school year.

Through the open library area and along several wings of the school are the classrooms, or as it says on each door, the Teaching-Learning-Groups (TLG's). These rooms are complete with lofts which the staff calls "cozy corners." The walls of many of the classrooms exhibit the school motto of "Together We Are Strong" which articulates the team approach. Classroom creeds cite individual rights and responsibilities that, when actualized, serve to maintain the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the group:

> I have the right to be respected.
> I have the responsibility to respect other people,

and

> I have the right to be safe and be cared for.
> I have the responsibility to treat people with care.

Typically, desks are placed in clusters, display boards divide classrooms into smaller nooks and crannies, and learning centres adorn table tops.

Radiating in other directions off the library and foyer are the music room, gymnasium, staff workroom, and kindergarten classrooms. Displayed in the staffroom are colourful felt cut-outs of each staff member, created on Valentine's day as a team and culture building experience. With a stretch of the imagination, it might be possible to match individuals to their counterparts in large and colorful photos which show teachers and students working together. Teacher belief statements surround the photos, articulating personal beliefs such as:

> We believe that every child can become a responsible learner in a positive environment,

and

> We believe that each child is an unique individual who deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. We believe that each child has the right to be able to learn in a safe and secure environment that allows for challenge and success.

Also on display are individual teacher goals, each one written on a construction-paper brick that, when placed with the others, forms a little red schoolhouse. Under the school is the sign:

> The message is clear that we're growing together -- striving to meet goals that help us to be the best that we can be!

To aid in this growth, professional development (PD) has been identified as a priority at Birch School. Built into the school's budget is a half-day of release time each week when opportunities for PD are provided to individual teachers on an as-needed basis to meet their needs. When the kindergarten teacher wanted to visit a classroom in

another school, she signed up for a particular afternoon, knowing that her class would be taught by a staff member who has time each week to provide for this sort of coverage. Teachers are expected to participate in at least one noonhour PD session each month, and they meet regularly beyond school hours for the thematic planning and year-level meetings that are part of the school's on-going professional development activities. Regularly, on the third Tuesday of each month, Kelly or lead teachers on staff facilitate PD meetings. A recent typical session focused on the further development and refinement of the school's student profile folders which the staff utilizes to maintain continuity in student programming and to demonstrate student growth.

To the staff of Birch school, then, attempting to be the best that they can be means attempting to live their philosophy by matching their practices with their beliefs. To this end, and to meet the needs of individuals and the school, they endeavour to work as a team. It was in the context of this school setting that the change of the PSPP occurred, and the manner in which the PSPP was adopted and implemented was significantly affected by the culture of Birch School. Indeed, the philosophies and goals of the PSPP were given structure, form and life through the interpretations of the Birch staff within the world of Birch School.

The Change

Adopting the Change

If growth means change, then Birch School is committed to change. This predisposition was recognized by the University when it initiated the idea of a restructured practicum model and first invited Kelly and the Birch staff to participate in the project. Nine months later, and three months prior to the practicum period, representatives of the University and the three participating schools (Birch included) gathered to articulate the focus and nature of the PSPP experience. Kelly (principal, on leave of absence), accompanied by Chris, two teachers and the acting principal, had an active voice in discussing the beliefs and practices that would guide the project's implementation and consolidation at Birch School.

To achieve congruency between the practicum vision and the school vision, the participants at this meeting felt that planning for the PSPP should address ways to: (a) provide teachers with the "big picture" of how the program would be structured, (b) develop skills and techniques to foster reflective practice, (c) orient the student teachers to each schools' culture, as demonstrated through beliefs and practices, (d) identify needs and facilitate the professional development of student and cooperating teachers, (e) organize time and schedule parallel occasions between the schools for such things as collaboration and unstructured discussion, and (f) develop procedures to

monitor and adjust the PSPP's implementation. With these ideas in mind, and with a sense of the role that she and her staff could play in shaping the PSPP, Kelly returned to Birch to initiate the program. "It's not a situation where change comes slowly here and you have to be cautious about what you ask them to do." Kelly finds that "if anything, we have too many new ideas and we have to make sure we're pulling them together and consolidating."

The PSPP was not entirely a departure from the school's previous experiences. Kelly and her staff had been involved in collaborative projects before, both with the University and with neighboring schools. "We had been involved in a collaboration project and we were interested in looking at a change. . . . There was a timing there, we were lucky to be asked to be involved at a time when we wanted that involvement." Yet there was more than fortuitous timing at stake.

Identifying with the change. As the PSPP was initiated, it became clear that Kelly, acting on behalf of her staff, identified with the change. Kelly explained that the Birch staff had recently been involved in a collaboration model with the University, which had given them some experience with linking, but which also had prompted them to look for a change. They felt that the previous project did not fully address their desire for a meaningful partnership; the University-designed projects for student teachers often did not fit with Birch's actual

classroom practices. Thus the PSPP was envisioned as better able to meet the school's need for a more meaningful linking of theory and practice. There would be opportunities for truer collaboration between the University and the school, and connections between Birch and the other two participating schools had already been prompted by their similar school philosophies.

The beliefs that led to the PSPP model were compatible with Kelly's and the school's. When Kelly introduced the PSPP to the Birch staff, she spoke of the philosophy behind it. She referred to Goodlad's ideas about the school as the center of change, supported by a changing University and teacher preparation program, and said that there is a need for research in education that is linked to and follows through to practice. She drew a parallel to what they were trying to do at Birch in terms of matching beliefs to practice, and suggested that teachers need to know about ways to teach and about the transition in moving from student to teacher. Kelly told the staff that a reflective decision-making model was envisioned for the student, and that ultimately the goal of the program would be to make it like a real teacher experience for the student teacher. Even as Kelly recognized that the timing was right for this change, more important to her was that the goals of the staff, at this point, seemed to be closely aligned with the philosophy behind the PSPP.

Supporting the change. Kelly and the staff adopted the PSPP because they identified with the changed nature of the practicum, and in doing so, they supported the change. There were expectations for the PSPP and anticipated benefits for individuals and the school. The PSPP was seen as a way to meet the needs of both teachers and student teachers: From the staff's previous experience with a University linking project, it had become apparent that their need to link theory to practice within a meaningful partnership was not being met.

A month before the practicum, Kelly introduced the PSPP at a staff meeting. She told the staff that she had been talking with the University people about what would be in it for the teachers and the student teachers. As an added endorsement, she mentioned that last year's participating school principal felt it had been great for her staff.

The professional development (PD) component of the program was seen by the staff as a potential benefit of the PSPP. A minimum of a half day each week would be devoted to the development of teacher identified needs, with facilitative support provided by the University. It was emphasized that all teachers in the school could benefit even if they did not have student teachers. One of the teachers remarked that it would be nice to get something in return. This was echoed by Kelly when she said, "I think the teachers truly see that they're getting something back. That it's not just giving but that there's something in it

for them too." Kelly noted that by acting as the faculty consultant, she would be receiving the faculty consultant's honorarium, but that it would be put into the school's PD fund so that the staff might benefit further from the PSPP.

On an individual basis, there were staff members who had previously been involved in practicum programs as cooperating teachers. To one teacher, new to her grade level, the PSPP seemed

> really exciting, especially the PD. I was in a phase where I was growing and I wanted to learn as much as I could. Then when the idea of the PD and the math came up . . . that was one of my goals this year, to really work on the new math curriculum. So that really sparked my interest.

Another experienced cooperating teacher thought it "fascinating that the program would involve a unique way of grouping several student teachers in one school." For teachers relatively new to the profession, there was the unexpected anticipation of being able to work with student teachers; within the traditional practicum program, this opportunity was customarily not extended to "beginning teachers."

As the project was adopted by the staff, teachers remembered their own experiences as student teachers, and stressed that with student teachers it is individual growth that needs to be measured. They liked the concept of having a network and time to talk and touch base, and those teachers who had not previously worked with student teachers felt more comfortable knowing that support would be

provided. The program "sounded exciting" and, as Kelly said, part of the excitement was the staff's sense that they could now "have input into the program rather than just facilitate something that someone else has designed." They would be able to pull their ideas together and consolidate the changes. Staff members approached Kelly, saying, "It can look how we want it" and Kelly affirmed, "Yes, that's exactly right."

Implementation

Experiencing the Change

How did the staff want it? What would be the staff's approach to the PSPP? When the staff identified with and supported the change, they did so because of the philosophy of the project and their sense that it would mesh with the way that Birch School was organized. They anticipated the benefits that it would bring to their school and to the teaching profession. Now the challenge would be to plan and implement those practices that would actualize the program's vision and goals. Kelly, as principal, faculty consultant and project leader at the school level, assumed a leadership role in planning and facilitating the specifics of the program and the approach that her staff might make to it. With Kelly's leadership, the Birch staff approached the changed nature of the practicum in a way that emphasized beliefs about learning as a precursor to practice.

The Pre-Practicum Period

During the pre-practicum period, when the stakeholders of the PSPP came together to plan, share ideas and exchange information, it was agreed that the school principals would need to pre-plan some of the activities of the PSPP. In keeping with the desire expressed during this initial planning meeting, to introduce the student teachers to the participating schools, the first major event of the PSPP would be an Academy for the student teachers.

The Academy, as an introduction to the PSPP and the participating school sites, would be held on the first two days of the practicum and involve all of the student teachers. Kelly and the two other principals (Rex and Rose) met at Maple School and outlined the logistics, the activities and the components that would be incorporated within the Academy.

Since the student teachers had been randomly selected for the PSPP, they were not aware of the special nature of the project. It was felt that they would need to be oriented to the PSPP and each school's environment, culture and philosophy. Student teachers would be encouraged to think about their own philosophy and beliefs about students and learning, and encouraged to become reflective about their experiences. The Academy, as the first group session, would introduce the concept of collaboration and promote collegiality among the student teachers. Suggestions that were made about how to do this included spending a half a

day in each school, running a session on school culture, discussing philosophies about children and learning, writing personal beliefs statements and enjoying a wine and cheese social. Breaking with the tradition of University-assigned placements, all principals agreed that they would like to observe and talk to the student teachers during the Academy before matching them to compatible cooperating teachers. During the meeting, Kelly re-stated and pulled together the ideas that were offered, and made notes to add to her planning file.

A week later saw Kelly and Rex putting the finishing touches on the organization and content of the Academy. Kelly, envisioning the total picture and how to put the parts together to create it, had drawn a timetable and plan for the two days. This she shared with Rose, who arrived later in the morning. Each principal would assume responsibility for planning and executing the portion of the Academy that would be offered in his or her own school.

The Academy. It was because of this leadership and facilitation that the student teachers could be found in the Birch School library area on the first afternoon of the Academy, with Kelly and Chris, for their introduction to the culture of Birch School. Topics of note were the philosophy of matching beliefs to practice: Kelly discussed the school's beliefs about learning and illustrated them with examples of how this translates into practice at Birch School. Chris told the student teachers about the focus at

Birch School on developing "pro-active social skills" and highlighted several areas of skill development that the student teachers would encounter during their time at Birch. She suggested that the student teachers use the first week of the practicum to get to know the children in their classrooms and to see what motivates them.

The student-led tours of each of the three schools allowed the student teachers an opportunity to observe the setting that would be their own for the duration of the practicum as well as the settings of the two other Partnership schools. Back at Birch, "We want you to become part of the staff" was Kelly's welcome to the student teachers as they were invited to become members of the school team. Kelly interviewed the school's seven student teachers individually, then matched each with a compatible cooperating teacher in an attempt to meet individual and school needs. The wine and cheese party at the close of the Academy provided a social ending to a professional beginning.

Organizing Principles

The philosophy that guided the PSPP's implementation included the desire for partnership links, but also was contingent upon the school's beliefs about learning. The underlying focus on matching beliefs and practices was made explicit as the events and activities of the PSPP were planned and implemented, and it started with the principal.

Kelly feels that if she says she values or believes something, then her actions as principal have to match what she says:

> What I try to say to myself all the time is: The things we believe about kids apply to adults and learning as well. And if we believe all kids can learn, then all teachers can learn and are still learning; that every child is a unique individual, so is every staff member; that learning is an active process for teachers as well as for kids. So if I try to translate that, what does that mean for my role to facilitate that?

Her facilitating role during the practicum indicated that she believes in the same philosophy for staff as the school holds for students. Similarly, the teachers approach with the student teachers mirrored the beliefs that they themselves actualize in the classroom with the children.

These principles and corresponding practices during the PSPP at Birch included:

1. Learning is an active process, therefore people need involvements that are real.
2. All people can learn, therefore opportunities for learning must exist.
3. Each person is a unique individual, therefore ways to meet individual needs must be found.
4. People must experience challenge and success, therefore appropriate expectations must be set.
5. Learning involves the development of the individual, therefore individual growth must be fostered.

6. Even though learning is an individual process, it can be achieved in an environment of shared support.

These principles of learning, as a basis for planning, organizing and implementing the PSPP, seemed to contribute to the growth of a community of learners and the actualization of a shared vision within the school.

The Practicum Period

Following the Academy, the student teachers began the practicum. It became apparent that as the staff matched beliefs and practices, the principles of learning that had been explained to the student teachers during the Academy were being played out on a broader scale in the events of the PSPP.

Experiencing real involvements. During the eight week practicum period, opportunities were afforded to both student teachers and cooperating teachers to take part in the activities and involvements of the PSPP. Underlying the actions of the principal and the staff as the PSPP was implemented was the belief that the practicum experience should parallel the teaching experience as closely as possible. The school activities and PSPP involvements at Birch were then structured to provide the student teachers with a realistic introduction to being a teacher and a staff member. During the eight weeks of the practicum, school activities included parent-teacher conferences, playground

supervision, school assemblies three times a week, special luncheons (Spud Day and a box-social), the school's professional development (PD) day on "pro-active social skills," staff meetings, PD sessions and School Culture Week. PSPP events for the student teachers included an Academy (a two day orientation to the PSPP) and weekly half-day PD sessions and small group meetings. The reality of working in Birch School meant that student teachers took part in all of the school's activities as well as the PSPP-initiated events.

Making the experience even more realistic was the principal's fulfillment of the faculty consultant's role. Just as the rest of the staff are supervised and evaluated by the principal, so too were the student teachers monitored and guided in their performance as staff members by Kelly.

Providing opportunities for learning. In keeping with the school's beliefs and practices to promote individual and staff growth, professional development became a key component of the PSPP, and because the student and cooperating teachers could provide release time from the classroom for each other, much of it occurred during school hours. Extending the concept of working as a team meant a link with the University, with one element of that link provided through weekly professional development activities facilitated by a University faculty member. Beginning in the third week, the cooperating teachers embarked upon a series of six half-day math inservices, with two clinical

supervision sessions added in weeks five and seven. Both the math and the supervision sessions were provided by the University's liaison faculty member. As well, Kelly arranged a session on "cooperative learning" which was given in week six by a District consultant. In addition to the half-day inservices each week, cooperating teachers were also afforded an additional half-day each week for such things as inter-school visitations and a year-level meetings. Early in the practicum, the cooperating teachers met with Kelly to discuss issues of concern, such as student teacher evaluation.

This model of internal coverage provided by the student teacher was a way to give cooperating teachers time during the school day for PD, and most of the teachers attended as many sessions as they felt they could. However, there were concerns expressed by both the teachers and the student teachers about this arrangement. The student teachers felt that the teachers were away a great deal which allowed less time for observations and conferences. Two teachers who shared one student teacher had originally planned on rotating their attendance at the inservices, but this proved unworkable: Toward the end of the practicum, a substitute teacher was provided by the school so that both teachers could attend. There were also concerns that because of either the nature of the class or the level of skills that the student teacher was exhibiting, that it would be inappropriate for the cooperating teacher to leave the

student teacher for a full half-day. There were two teachers in this position who were not able to attend the clinical supervision sessions, even though they may have benefitted from the information provided. One teacher mentioned that parents had been commenting to her about the time that she was away from the classroom, and all of the teachers thought that the sessions would be more accessible had they been rotated between the three school locations rather than localized in one of the other schools. Yet despite these difficulties, the cooperating teachers indicated overwhelmingly that the opportunities for learning within the PSPP were a highlight of the program.

Opportunities for learning were also provided for the student teachers. All of the student teachers spent the first two days of the practicum in the Academy. This provided them with the chance to become oriented to the cultures of all three schools and to begin thinking about their own philosophies of teaching. During the next seven weeks, there were formal inservices held on lesson and unit planning (facilitated by Chris and Kelly) and classroom management and accountability (arranged by Kelly and facilitated by a District consultant). As well, time was provided each week for informal group meetings at which Kelly would meet with the student teachers to "touch base," share concerns, and reflect on the week's activities. At the end of the practicum, all of the student teachers indicated that the small group meetings and the

opportunities for PD had been very significant features of the practicum experience.

Meeting individual and school needs. This organizing principle was apparent within the context of the school and the PSPP, as well as for students, teachers and student teachers. It was also apparent that the focus on meeting needs was established prior to the practicum period. For example, one on-going school PD practice that attempts to meet teacher needs involves the release time that is built into the school's budget. Individual teachers, on an as-needed basis, can arrange a professional development activity and have their class taught by the covering teacher.

Kelly believes that opportunities for challenge and success for students and teachers are important, and she is aware that individual teachers have different strengths and needs. She felt that the PSPP could address the needs of individuals and the school: When the staff discussed the PSPP, the concept of individual growth and progress was mentioned. The PSPP was accepted by the school in response to school needs and it was emphasized that opportunities designed to meet the needs of teachers and student teachers would be built into the program.

A significant instance where individual needs were met occurred early in the PSPP at the Academy, when Kelly matched student teachers with suitable cooperating teachers. Typically practicum students are randomly assigned to

cooperating teachers by the University. Kelly, however, believes that the relationship between the student and cooperating teacher should be based upon compatible personalities and philosophies, and on complementary needs. During the second afternoon of the Academy, after having had the opportunity to observe the student teachers for a day and a half, Kelly interviewed each student teacher individually. She asked each one about their previous practicum experiences, their desired year level, what they thought were meaningful concepts from the previous day's culture building activity, and what they envisioned as the ideal classroom. Each student teacher was then asked to briefly visit two or three selected classrooms before the final match was made. Even though Kelly felt she had misjudged the matching in one instance, that this attempt to meet individual needs was appreciated and effective was reinforced by the cooperating teachers during their debriefing session at the end of the practicum.

As the PSPP progressed, it became apparent that the PD sessions were not only a perk for the participants, but were organized in response to the participants' identified needs. This held true for the unstructured sessions as well. The participants' needs for supervision, classroom management, cooperative learning, planning and math skills were addressed, just as the need to share, talk and support each other was recognized. Each week, both student teachers and cooperating teachers were allowed time to informally address

such collective needs. During inservices, the participants were encouraged to ask questions, share individual concerns, and help determine the direction that upcoming sessions would follow.

Meeting needs occurred on an individual basis as Kelly worked with cooperating and student teachers who needed assistance, and cooperating teachers devoted time to their student teachers. Two student teachers who experienced difficulties were afforded more frequent classroom observations and personal conferences: One student teacher recounted that Kelly had spent over five hours with him one week when he needed help with classroom management. Kelly also worked closely with individual teachers who felt they needed her expertise in observation and conferencing techniques to contribute to their student teachers' progress in the classroom. At the mid-point of the practicum, Chris became involved in the supervision and evaluation of the student teachers to assist Kelly with this demanding and time-consuming function of the faculty consultant's role.

Meeting appropriate expectations. Kelly has high standards for her own performance and she expects the same kind of dedication from her staff. Kelly told the student teachers, "We need enough challenge to grow, but not so much that we're not healthy." The challenge to the student teachers lay in meeting not only their own expectations, but those of Kelly and the cooperating teachers.

At each student teacher group meeting, Kelly outlined what would be going on in the school during the next week and clarified what was expected of the student teachers. Kelly's expectations lay in the broad sphere of the student teacher's professional role in the school and they mirrored the expectations that she holds for the staff. Student teachers were expected to attend all staff functions, which included PD sessions, team- and culture-building activities and staff meetings, just as it was expected that they would share at assemblies and during small group meetings. At an even more basic level, Kelly and the staff found that expectations for responsible behaviour (such as school arrival times and following through on assignments) needed to be clearly articulated.

Within the classrooms and at group meetings, the cooperating teachers struggled with the issue of determining appropriate expectations for specific individuals and for student teachers in general. One of the teachers commented that information given during the clinical supervision sessions had been helpful; that it is best not to have expectations for what the student teachers should be doing, but rather one should expect to take the student teachers from where they are. It was explained that supervision strategies are on a continuum which ranges from direct supervision (for those students who "need to be told") to indirect (for those more able to reflect). It was also suggested that cooperating teachers could utilize different

supervision strategies based upon an individual student teacher's level, that supervision should be objective, and that it should stress the student teacher's development of the ability to make choices.

Growing as an individual. The promotion of individual growth has led to a number of practices at Birch, such as individualized instruction through learning centres, demonstrations of learning, growth-oriented progress reports, and the use of student profile folders. Revealing, too, of this focus are the staff's own efforts to achieve individual growth whereby they set their own goals and create action plans for their achievement. During the PSPP, this practice was extended to the student teachers so that evaluation became a formative process with a growth-oriented mid-point evaluation. The evaluation form contained individual goals that had been identified by Kelly, the student teacher, and the cooperating teacher, as well as an action plan through which the goals would be worked on for the remainder of the practicum. The final evaluation was written to reflect the strengths of the student teacher and the growth that had been achieved.

The development of the reflective teacher was a goal of the PSPP, and to this end, each student teacher was given a journal in which to reflect upon his or her experiences. Each student and cooperating teacher then determined how the journals could be used to foster reflectiveness and individual growth. One pair used it as a response journal

through which the student and cooperating teacher were able to dialogue and communicate: This meaningful exchange was regarded as an "incredible experience." Another cooperating teacher found that, whereas the student was not able to verbalize what he was learning, the journal indicated a great deal of reflectiveness and provided a basis for discussion. The journal became another way to articulate personal growth.

Providing support. At Birch School, teachers provide, and are provided with, personal and professional support so that they can achieve growth and meet expectations. This continued during the PSPP, where the emphasis on group involvements accentuated the established norms of collegiality. For teachers learning new content in math, there was the support of working with other staff members where it "didn't matter if you made a mistake." There was support for trying new skills in the classroom and for sharing the experience with others at the next meeting. It was there in the daily interactions and during difficulties when cooperating teachers sought Kelly's support and advice. A tangible sign of support was the money provided from the school budget for a substitute teacher which allowed a cooperating teacher to attend inservices when the student teacher was not able to cover the class.

To the student teachers, the support of the group was a key element of the practicum. During the weekly group meetings, students spoke frankly about their difficulties

and of the benefits of being able to talk to other student teachers. At one of the meetings, Kelly talked to the student teachers about children in classrooms who are in the inner circle and those who are in the outer circle saying,

> What am I going to do to bring that student into the inner circle? The largest number of students need to feel that they are in the inner circle. Teachers need to think about who is and who isn't.

Translating this into action within the PSPP meant providing the mechanisms of support to the student teachers through scheduled meetings and common release time. The personal dimensions of shared jokes, interactions, and conversations with all staff members, and the supportive atmosphere of the school, brought the student teachers into the inner circle of the staff.

Summary

Throughout the PSPP, there were activities and involvements such as professional development sessions, year-level meetings, and school visitations. Making the experience real for the student teachers meant that attendance at staff meetings, PD sessions and staff activities was expected. Kelly, subsuming the faculty consultant's role within that of the school principal's, observed in classrooms and contributed to teacher growth by responding to needs and by planning and facilitating sessions. When it became apparent that a particular focus for PD would be of benefit, it was offered. The desire to

meet individual and school needs prompted adaptive, on-site planning and facilitation, and opportunities for learning were provided on both a regular and special basis.

At the same time, school activities, not specifically connected with the PSPP but affecting the nature of the experience, went on. Student teachers, as part of the team, participated in the real involvements of teachers in Birch School. Staff meetings, student assemblies for sharing, inservices, staff "bonding activities" such as a Spud Luncheon and a "culture-building" session, a special event day when "leprechauns" traipsed through the school leaving small green footprints in their wake, school visitors from near and far, and the ups and downs of daily life in the school gave meaning and definition to the philosophies articulated and demonstrated by the Birch staff.

So it was that the staff's approach to the PSPP could not be held in isolation from the approach that is taken on a regular basis within Birch School, and the reasons for that approach could not be entirely distinguished from those beliefs that underscored and guided the week by week involvements. Yet to fully understand the staff's approach to the PSPP change, a detailed look at the processes that were employed at Birch School is required. The next chapter recounts the staff's involvement in the processes of change, which should be considered against the backdrop of this chapter's account of the context and content of the PSPP at Birch.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings: The Processes of the Change

Playing a Role in Change

As the new practicum model was adopted and implemented, the staff of Birch School experienced the events and happenings of the PSPP. But change is a process, not an event, and the PSPP involvements were made tangible through the processes that the staff and PSPP participants initiated and experienced.

Within the culture of Birch School, there are distinct norms of behaviour that bind the staff together and give definition to the way that the staff operates. During the PSPP those norms of behaviour were obvious influences on the approaches taken by the staff. Indeed, it appeared that the processes that were observed were those that the Birch staff customarily used in their day-to-day business. Yet, as Kelly told the student teachers, Birch School had been influenced by its participation in the PSPP and by the student teachers' presence, and it was different now from how it had been before the practicum. The inevitability of change and a conception of "change as growth" was clear: In the process of implementing changes, Birch School and its staff had developed and strengthened the beliefs and processes that make it distinct.

The processes that were most apparent during the PSPP included: (a) linking, (b) interacting, (c) communicating,

(d) planning, (e) facilitating, (f) solving problems, and (g) making decisions. After having played a role in the processes of change, the participants were then able to reflect upon the PSPP experience. For the Birch staff, these were processes that overlapped and intertwined, but for the purpose of illuminating the findings each process will be described in isolation from the others. In reality, the processes were not so clearly distinct.

Linking

The University initiated the idea of the Partnership Project with the schools. The new notion of the practicum, to "link three schools with fine reputations and good teachers with the challenge of the practicum experience" had been espoused from the initial stage of the project. As noted in the previous chapter, the Birch staff adopted the project because they identified with and supported its philosophy and goals. From this point, the nature of the Partnership was established by the actual processes involved in linking institutions and the people within them.

Linking the University and school. Kelly and the University faculty members began the linking process about a year before the rest of the Birch staff became involved. Prior to the practicum, meetings between Kelly and faculty members of the University Field Experiences Office stressed talking and negotiating:

> I'd say we've had six meetings already probably so we've done lots of talking, lots of negotiating as we

> went through and I found them to be really open; that [the University staff] have been really ready to listen to what we wanted and to facilitate that. [The University member] has been really supportive, to say sure, we can approve that, that can happen. . . . So it's that negotiation that has to happen.

A few months before the practicum, three teacher representatives attended one of the PSPP meetings with Kelly, where the nature of the link with the University was explored further through discussion and brainstorming. About a month prior to the practicum, these ideas were brought to the staff.

Once the practicum began, the linking of Birch School with the University was formalized through the assignment to the project of a University faculty member to assist with professional development and to act as the University's representative at the school site. The teachers at Birch School were able to learn new skills and discuss concerns during the weekly inservices; they saw the link with the University as one which gave them opportunities for professional development. They also saw the link as a source for and access to new ideas, whether those ideas pertained to curriculum changes and new teaching strategies or concerned their own involvement in research-based endeavors. The University link for other issues, such as specific concerns with student teacher progress, was not as apparent or as directly sought: Teachers approached Kelly with practicum-related concerns.

Linking the schools. Prior to the PSPP, Birch School was involved in a process of linking with Maple, one of the

other participating schools. This had been prompted by their similar school philosophies, a shared focus on school culture-building initiatives, and the existence of personal links between staff members. The linking for the PSPP was seen as another meaningful way to continue this relationship. The process of linking Birch School with Maple and Willow (the other participating school) during the PSPP was then created by establishing physical proximity so that personal, professional and philosophical links could be fostered. This occurred as the cooperating and student teachers attended group inservices and grade-level meetings during school hours, and two social functions after school hours. One Birch teacher indicated that he had made a contact with a teacher from another school and that they were in the process of exchanging and sharing learning resources and testing materials. He anticipated that this professional relationship would continue:

> We had a meeting here of year five and six teachers and we've since exchanged ideas.

Several Birch teachers indicated that the chance to visit the other schools and see their philosophies in action had been beneficial:

> [The linking] is a very, very good idea, because you see, we have in every one of those schools something different going on; the link provided another input in my system. I was able to get ideas from them. Just going into their schools, you see different things, and I enjoyed that.

> It was really interesting to see the other two schools and look at the culture they've created in their schools, the climate in their classrooms.

The linking between schools also gave Kelly the opportunity to work closely with other principals and to establish a strong bond with her peers. Early in the project, the principals expressed their desire to maintain links with each other and to continue working together in subsequent years of the PSPP.

Communicating

Vital to the establishment of a meaningful partnership is the development of processes for communication. Conflicting and busy schedules meant that Kelly and two of the members of the University faculty involved in the PSPP were usually not able to meet personally. They relied upon telephone contact, and periodically exchanged messages through their respective secretaries. The University's liaison faculty member was able to communicate directly with the school, particularly during the weeks when the inservice were located at Birch rather than at Maple or Willow. A midpoint meeting of the principals and faculty members was prompted by the University's wish to remain in contact during the practicum and by Kelly's desire to clarify the plans for the final four weeks.

A process of written communication, visible in the many signs and notice boards in Birch's staffroom, was apparent within the school during the PSPP. One vehicle of communication that Birch regularly employed was the "white board" in the staffroom kitchen. Each day Kelly

communicated a message to the staff, which included her agenda for the day, notes about special happenings in the school and visitors that would be in the building, appreciative comments and provocative thoughts. PSPP events for cooperating and student teachers were always listed on the "white board" so that they, and the rest of the staff, were aware of what was going on.

Verbal communication was on-going. At the beginning of the practicum, the cooperating teachers communicated with Kelly as a group:

> We met once, for sure, and we discussed anything that we needed to discuss and she talked about evaluation and getting ready to write the midterm evaluation. We met with her and discussed any difficulties and any successes. And she talked to us about [the student teachers'] perception about what was going on too. Not individually, but sort of a general perception of what was happening and how they felt. So that was really beneficial too. It was always positive.

From this point, they communicated when needed on an individual basis:

> We talked all the time. "I need to know this," or "What do you think about that? Help me write this evaluation," or "Read this evaluation. What should I do with it? Is it right, do I change it, what do I need?" She was always there to guide you through that. Or "How do I deal with this situation?" She was always there.

Each week Kelly met with the student teachers. These meetings began with a round-the-table communication of the events, happenings and feelings that each student teacher had experienced that week. (A general sense of these perceptions was shared with the cooperating teachers to keep

them aware of the group's needs and to assist with planning.) Also at each of the meetings Kelly communicated what would be happening in the school during the upcoming week and reminded the student teachers to watch the "white board" for messages.

Communications between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers were both verbal and written. Verbal communications included the post-observation conferences that were a part of the supervision cycle, and the more informal exchanges that occurred throughout the day. The staff also agreed that all of the student teachers would be required to keep a written journal. At the beginning of the practicum, one student-cooperating teacher pair talked about how to handle the reflective component of the practicum, and they decided to utilize a "response journal" wherein each would write a reply to the other's entry. As it turned out, this process was a "wonderful thing": Both of them felt that they had learned a lot about each other and themselves, and in the process had experienced a lot of personal growth. Some cooperating teachers found that their student teachers communicated most effectively in a written format, while other teachers found their student teachers to be more comfortable with oral communication. Because of this, decisions about how to meaningfully communicate with student teachers were based upon each individual's needs and strengths; the effectiveness of the communication process

was then exhibited in the level of interaction that resulted.

Interacting

The nature of the PSPP was such that it provided avenues through which the philosophical desire for collaboration and collegiality could be actualized. Like communication, the process of interaction is inherent to the concept of partnership or linking. Opportunities for interaction during the PSPP occurred between the Birch staff and the University, with teachers from other schools, and within Birch School.

One of the first events that the Birch cooperating teachers participated in was a wine and cheese reception at Maple School. In attendance were all of the participants of the PSPP, and the occasion provided them with an opportunity to interact on a social basis. This informal interaction led to a more structured opportunity to interact with the cooperating teachers from Maple and Willow at cross-school year-level meetings:

> The first session, we met as a group of 1/2 teachers at Willow School and it was just a session where we talked about our student teacher and our struggles and successes. It was just at the beginning so it was interesting. We could just talk to each other about their math program or their language arts program. I found that really exciting and beneficial, and the very first thing we did, we got to tour the two other schools.

For the duration of the practicum, the Birch cooperating teachers attended professional development sessions with teachers from the other two schools.

The interaction that the Birch staff had with the University, as they participated in the University-facilitated inservices, could be classified as a teacher-learner relationship. During the inservices, the participants were invited to respond to ideas and to share their own thoughts about the content that was being taught. Interaction outside of the sessions was also encouraged; on several occasions it was suggested that during the week, the teachers could practice the skills that they had just learned, then return to share their experiences at the next inservice. This kind of follow-up sharing did occur; for example, two teachers who shared a student teacher discussed their experiences with journal writing, and several teachers talked about the nature of their clinical supervision experiences.

Typically at the inservices, the Birch teachers sat together and could often be observed speaking quietly to each other. When asked about this, they explained that they felt comfortable interacting with their own staff:

> Because the math concepts were new, it was safer to share with people you knew. I didn't mind making a mistake with Darleen. We know each other's classrooms and that helps for ideas and resource sharing.

At the same time, it was thought that:

> even if you are sitting with your own staff at sessions, you still hear the dialogue of other teachers.

It is interesting to note that while one of the goals of the PSPP was to increase the opportunities for interaction between colleagues, another effect occurred for cooperating teachers within Birch School. While they continued to interact with each other, their interaction with the rest of the Birch staff was more limited. Their time was taken with the student teachers, for as one cooperating teacher said:

> All my time was taken up with him. That's another thing, that my interaction with the rest of the teachers stopped. Not completely stopped, but it definitely wasn't the same. Gail and I used to do a lot of planning on units together. Well, that stopped. It will start again next week . . . but that's OK too, sometimes you have to have different focuses. And it doesn't mean that relationship ended. We'll start it again next week.

Teachers who did not have student teachers also noticed this change in the interaction process, for teachers at Birch are accustomed to working as a team. One teacher said that she missed "teaming-up" with the other classes; because both of the other teachers at her year level had student teachers, they were not able to "team-up" as they usually did. Several teachers missed the interactions that they normally would have had with Kelly, as the PSPP seemed to take a great deal of her time. Expanding the Birch team to include the student teachers seemed to change the interaction processes within the school.

Planning

Planning for the PSPP occurred prior to the practicum, as the practicum progressed, and in the post-practicum debriefing sessions. At each stage, the planning process involved various stakeholders, with Kelly playing a major role.

Pre-practicum planning. During the pre-practicum period, the University was closely involved in planning. There were a number of meetings prior to the practicum period where Kelly and the other two administrators met with University faculty and determined the direction that the PSPP could take. Thus, when the PSPP was introduced to the staff, it was apparent that planning had preceded the initiation at the school level: Kelly told the staff about the many meetings that she had attended with the University and the other schools, and she shared with them the plans for the Academy, the arrangements for weekly PD sessions and ideas about how the evaluation of students could be handled. She emphasized the appeal of being able to shape the program to suit the teachers and of the negotiating that had been done to date with the University.

Practicum planning. As the PSPP continued, so too did the principal's role in planning. With the PSPP on the school-site, the role of the principal was enhanced and the University's role in planning was not as apparent. Planning for the day-to-day involvements became the domain of the principal. Kelly planned regular weekly meetings for

Birch's student teachers, and for the Birch cooperating teachers as required.

For those events that involved all three schools, Kelly met or spoke regularly with the other two principals. Together they planned the Academy for the student teachers, arranged the inservices for the cooperating teachers, and responded to teacher and student teacher needs by planning appropriate professional development sessions. Kelly, with the other principals, planned all of the common events that the student teachers took part in. At the mid-point of the project, the University again became involved in planning, as Kelly and the other principals attended a meeting with faculty members to share perceptions and coordinate plans for the latter half of the program.

The nature of planning. It appeared that the actual planning for the PSPP, outside of the school and with the other stakeholders, was a group process that involved the other administrators and to a lesser extent, the University faculty. At the school level, planning was an individual process based upon group input where the principal collected information and suggestions from the staff to act upon.

The planning processes were typically adaptive, reactive and flexible. For example, when it became apparent that the student teachers required assistance with classroom management skills, Kelly accessed and scheduled the services of a District consultant. Similarly, when the principals realized that the student teachers needed more time for

reflecting in their journals, they made arrangements for in-school time, and when the cooperating teachers needed help with clinical supervision, appropriate plans were made. Birch teachers were flexible in rearranging their own timetables to accommodate schedules that had been jointly-planned with the other schools.

Post-practicum planning. When Kelly looked back on the planning processes that had occurred during the PSPP, she felt that they had allowed for too much flexibility and she noted that schedules and times for all inservices and sessions should have been available to the participants at the beginning of the practicum. "We know that they want classroom management and supervision. If it's scheduled, there's an option to come or not." The student teachers reiterated this idea, saying that, because of the unique nature of the PSPP and the fact that they had no prior knowledge of the project when they arrived at the school, an agenda and outline of the PSPP would have been helpful. At the same time, a flexible approach to planning made it possible to accommodate and adapt to emergent needs.

Facilitating

During the implementation of the PSPP, activities were facilitated by having: (a) cooperating teacher and student teacher sessions coordinated with the other schools, (b) mutual classroom coverage provided by student and cooperating teachers, (c) student teacher and cooperating

teacher presentations led by key people from the University, and from within the school and the School District, and (d) University support as determined by the school's needs. Within this framework, facilitating roles were played by the Birch staff.

The principal's role. It was apparent that the main source of leadership and facilitation at the school level was provided by the principal. Kelly, in her dual role as principal of the school and faculty consultant, coordinated her staff's attendance at PSPP functions by arranging for substitute teachers as needed, supervising student teachers, and ensuring that the staff were aware of schedules and arrangements. She facilitated the portion of the Academy that was held at Birch, led all of the regular meetings and several PD sessions for student teachers at Birch, and arranged for space and equipment for other facilitator's sessions.

Kelly knew that in the role of faculty consultant, the classroom supervision demands would take time and energy, so she tried to include student teacher observations as part of her daily routine. (Kelly typically spends a quarter of the school day in classrooms.) She observed, and conferenced with, student teachers as often as she could so that her contribution to their midpoint and final evaluations would be meaningful, but found that the time she could spend with them individually was limited. Even so, student teachers

who experienced difficulties were afforded extra time and assistance when needed.

The Birch staff. Chris, Birch's curriculum coordinator, played a facilitating role in the PSPP. Birch School's involvement in developing pro-active social skills has been fostered by Chris' leadership, and Chris introduced this focus to the student teachers during the Academy. She also facilitated a session on unit planning for the Birch student teachers, as well as a full-day session on "pro-social skills" for all of the Birch staff and student teachers near the end of the practicum. At the midpoint of the practicum, Chris facilitated the supervision of four of the student teachers thereby assisting Kelly with some of the demands of observation and conferencing.

It is clear, too, that other Birch teachers are currently involved in leadership positions; at staff meetings, various teachers reported on their responsibilities in specific curriculum and program areas. Thus, the roles that other staff members played during the PSPP included facilitating the staff's involvement in ongoing initiatives such as school culture-building, team-building, and demonstrations of learning at school assemblies.

Other facilitators. The University faculty member who was assigned to the project facilitated the math and supervision sessions that the Birch cooperating teachers attended. As well, a District consultant facilitated a

session on "cooperative learning" for cooperating teachers, and two sessions on "classroom management" for the student teachers. Essentially, it appeared that by accessing appropriate resources and personnel, the Birch staff were able to facilitate the learning process.

Solving Problems

In any change, even the most carefully laid plans and well-intentioned facilitation can develop "glitches." It was inevitable that problems would arise during the PSPP, but of more interest than the problems themselves was the manner in which the staff coped with those problems. Like the planning process, the problem solving process was typically adaptive and flexible, as most problems became situations. Sometimes the situations could be changed, and other times, the situations required adjustments on the part of the participants.

A key element of the PSPP plan was to place a cluster of student teachers in each school, so as agreed upon, Birch School made preparations to accommodate ten student teachers with cooperating teachers. When only seven student teachers rather than the promised ten were assigned to the school, Kelly first attempted to have the situation rectified through University channels. When this approach did not work, Kelly and the teachers then adjusted their plans within the school. Two of the teachers who had asked for student teachers reconciled their wishes, and one student

teacher was "shared" by two cooperating teachers. Similarly, when the University moved a student teacher (who had been experiencing difficulties at a non-PSPP school) to Birch half-way through the practicum period, Kelly and the chosen cooperating teacher accommodated what turned out to be a rather difficult situation. Flexibility and a willingness to accommodate others' needs was part of the problem-solving process.

At the same time, there was a determination within the school to satisfy their own needs. It appeared to be a priority that if at all possible, the student and cooperating teachers would attend the professional development sessions. For example, when the logistics of these PD sessions were discussed at one of the early meetings for cooperating teachers, several teachers said that the times (which had been pre-arranged with the other schools) were not convenient but that they would rearrange their own timetables to accommodate the situation. Two of the seven teachers thought that they would not be able to attend at all and Kelly said that she would try find a way to assist them. Two sessions later, both teachers were able to attend, for a substitute teacher had been provided by the school. This commitment to cooperating teachers continued during the practicum with school-funded substitute teachers as a regular practice. Similarly, to allow Kelly to attend the Academy, one of the Birch teachers was designated as

principal for the day while a substitute teacher covered his class.

Student teachers benefitted from problem-solving which was based upon needs. On one occasion, the classroom teachers attended a conference which coincided with an afternoon inservice for the student teachers. The cooperating teachers had arranged for substitute teachers to cover their classes, but one of the substitute teachers did not arrive. Through a process of "re-shuffling," the students in the classrooms were rearranged to allow all of the student teachers to attend their PD session.

Adaptive problem-solving meant that plans could be changed. During the second week of the practicum, Kelly asked the student teachers for feedback about the way that the PSPP was unfolding. When several people mentioned that they were finding it difficult to find time for reflection and journal writing, Kelly said that she had talked with the other principals about this problem. Starting the next week, time in addition to the regular half a day session that the group was involved in each week was made available for this type of informal activity.

There were situations during the PSPP that required flexibility, adjustment and accommodation. Sometimes, however, despite the efforts of the staff, certain situations remained difficult and demanding. The approach taken to these situations, such as a student teacher's struggles with a very difficult class of children or the

cooperating teachers' frustrations with their student teachers' behaviours, was to persevere and to stress what had been achieved rather than what had not.

Making Decisions

The Birch staff believes that it is a team, and that belief affects the decision-making process. Kelly explained her role in decision-making:

> I don't think that because I'm the principal, I make the decisions, so the administrative team includes Chris and I, and often other leadership people in terms of lead people involved in initiatives at the school. I use [administrative team] specifically for Chris and I, and I do believe that we are partners. My role isn't above her. We have different role and responsibility statements, but it doesn't mean that I have more authority or more power or more decision-making than she does. I think the only way the we'll be successful is if we work together as a team and support each other.

It is clear that Kelly played a major role in adopting and implementing the PSPP, yet decisions that affected the staff, and for which the staff was accountable, seemed to involve its participation. That participation occurred at group meetings or in individual conversations with Kelly. Together the staff decided that the use of journals was required for the student teachers, although the way in which they used them was left up to individual pairs of cooperating and student teachers.

There appeared to be a great deal of trust between staff members and Kelly; they seemed to accept that Kelly made decisions after she had considered the best interests of individuals and the school. (For example, all of the

cooperating teachers were pleased that Kelly had decided to match the student teachers with cooperating teachers.) At the same time, when group decisions were required, Kelly attempted to reconcile the majority of interests by working towards gaining a consensus. The decision-making process that occurred at one of the Birch staff meetings illustrates this point.

Chris, who is responsible for developing a "pro-social" approach to discipline, raised the problem of rough play on the playground and proposed that as a preventative measure, the staff increase the level of supervision on the playground. This issue was discussed at some length before a vote was taken on the motion. When the majority did not support the motion, it was again discussed, with Kelly and Chris clarifying the benefits of such a proposal. More staff members appeared agreeable, but it was clear that a consensus could not be reached. Ultimately, Kelly and Chris made the decision to enact the proposal: Increasing the supervision schedule is not a popular decision, but in this case it was considered necessary from the broader perspective of school needs. The staff accepted the decision, Kelly and Chris thanked the staff, and commented that they would continue to monitor the problem and the effectiveness of the proposed solution.

Perhaps more indicative of the nature of the decision-making process at Birch was the infrequent use of such formal methods as motions and votes at staff meetings to

obtain group consensus. The type of decision to be made determined the process, and typically at Birch the staff was committed to common goals. During the PSPP, the staff worked together to implement a practicum that reflected shared beliefs about learning, and as such, decision-making became absorbed within the process of goal attainment.

Outcomes: Reflecting Upon the Change

The reflective process involves describing what was done, determining what it meant, confronting the issue of how it came to be like that, and reconstructing the situation to see how it might have been done differently. The Birch staff holds a strong belief in continually examining their practices to see if they match with what they believe, and this process of reflection was apparent during the practicum, then articulated when the practicum came to a close. The participants reflected upon their experiences, reconciled them with their beliefs and planned for future practices. They were able to consider their experiences and the progress that they thought had be made toward advancing the PSPP goals.

The Participants' Perceptions

The principal's perception. Kelly was conscious of assessing both her own role within the change and the broader impact of the PSPP change on the school. Early in the program, perhaps anticipating the demands that the PSPP would place upon her, she said that she "would have to see

how it goes" and that she was "not sure what she had gotten herself into!" At the end of the eight week practicum period, she was able to look back and consider how things had worked out.

When Kelly looked at the role that she had played as faculty consultant, she felt that she had not fulfilled this role in the traditional sense of the word. (The traditional role of faculty consultant involves regular/weekly visits to the student teacher's classroom and participation in a clinical supervision process.) However, when she considered the role that she had played in holding meetings and coordinating PD sessions, she felt that she had been able to offer a great deal of educational leadership to the student teachers, which is something that she tries to do with the Birch teachers as well. Kelly feels that a strength of philosophy is crucial to the PSPP, and for her the best part of the practicum was meeting with the student teachers to write creeds and talk about philosophy. It was a "personal highlight."

The process of reflection was continuous and ongoing as Kelly was in constant communication with the Birch teachers while the practicum progressed. The staff debriefing session which Kelly held with her teachers after the PSPP confirmed several ideas which they had discussed during the practicum. Kelly had a clear understanding of the professional development needs of the student and cooperating teachers; classroom management and clinical

supervision sessions should have been held early in the practicum, and ways to develop and utilize reflective tools should have been explored earlier and in greater depth. It was thought that cooperating teachers could have been involved in both an Academy and in weekly school-level meetings such as those that the student teachers had experienced.

Kelly was also able to reflect upon the impact of the PSPP on the rest of the staff. When the staff adopted the change, they anticipated that there would be benefits for the entire school. However, as the PSPP was implemented, those benefits, such as the entire staff's access to PD activities, did not materialize. Sessions held during school hours were limited to just those teachers for whom student teachers could provide classroom coverage. "There was so much going on, but they felt on the outs." Kelly wants to explore, with the staff, ways to broaden and share the PSPP experiences.

In retrospect, Kelly was pleased with the PSPP experience and her role within it. She felt that it was rich in learning opportunities for the student and cooperating teachers, and that the school-based (rather than classroom-based) focus for the student teachers provided them with a realistic teaching experience. At the same time, she thought that certain professional development needs could have been anticipated, and that the paperwork for the PSPP (to communicate schedules and plans to the

participants) needed to be "tightened-up." The principal's fulfillment of the faculty consultant role and the University's role within the school are other issues which she feels need to be explored further.

The cooperating teachers' perceptions. At the end of the practicum, the Birch cooperating teachers reflected individually and as a group, upon their experiences within the PSPP. Their thoughts centered both upon the work that they had done with their student teachers and upon the broader impact of the PSPP on the school staff.

Many of the cooperating teachers found that in the process of working with student teachers, they had become more aware of their own teaching practices:

> You have routines and you're so used to doing it, then you have to go back and think about it. I've made changes. It's easy to fall into habits.
>
> I was able to pick up on skills to improve my own teaching by helping the student teacher clarify his own skills. They have to know why you're doing it.
>
> I needed to verbalize what I knew. . . . it furthered my thought processes. You really have to know what you're doing to be able to tell someone else why you're doing that.

And it confirmed practices that teachers normally used in their classrooms:

> It is rewarding to see them modelling something you do effectively.
>
> They're in the survival mode, they're not really themselves, they do a lot of what you do. I think it was important for me to see that things in my room work. I wasn't so sure that they did work.

Just as it was for the student teachers, the PSPP was a learning experience for the cooperating teachers. They felt that they had learned a great deal about how to work with student teachers:

> I found out where I lacked! One of my strengths is relationships and I hadn't asked him to work on relationships because it was so natural for me.
>
> You need to focus on certain skills. I gave mine far too much and he was overwhelmed.

While one of the "first-time" cooperating teachers thought that a list of supervision skills was needed because she felt like she didn't know what to do, another more experienced cooperating teacher thought that with this practicum, more than with any other, she had the guidance, the time and the structure within which to develop her supervision skills.

In considering the impact of the PSPP, and whether the PSPP involvements would change the way in which things are done in the classroom, one teacher said:

> Oh definitely, definitely. For instance, in cooperative learning, I have learned that children can be each other's teachers and I want to use this sort of thing for my day to day teaching to promote their self-esteem and to promote achievement in the classroom. So it is going to really affect the way that I look at things. And also in the math inservice, I found it most profitable because we had been sort of emphasizing drills, and now I'll be emphasizing processes. I really benefitted a lot. I'm going to teach math rather differently next year.

Another teacher thought that she too would be trying some of the math ideas next year, while others had already tried some of the new strategies.

When the Birch teachers reflected as a group about the most significant features of the PSPP experience, they noted that:

1. The principal's matching of student teachers to cooperating teachers worked well.

In all instances, this was seen to be a very positive process. The teachers were pleased with the decisions Kelly had made, as they generally experienced a level of compatibility with their student teachers: "It sure made a difference," and "I'm glad with mine."

2. There is a need to further examine the extent of the principal's role in the supervision of student teachers.

The teachers were concerned that the role of faculty consultant and PSPP facilitator, when combined with Kelly's role as principal, was far too demanding. They thought that the University should be involved in some capacity in this area, yet, as one teacher voiced, "It would be a shame not to have Kelly involved, she brings out the best in people."

3. The Academy and the focus on philosophy was an excellent start for the student teachers.

It was felt that the Academy should also address the issue of commitment and what it means to be a professional; expectations for arrival times and appropriate staffroom talk could be conveyed to the student teachers.

4. Like student teachers, cooperating teachers need to be self-reflective. There is a need to expose the student teacher to a wide range of reflective teaching tools.

The teachers thought that if they were asking the student teachers to be reflective, then they should be too, for "you

don't survive very well as a teacher if reflectiveness is not in place." One teacher thought that by being involved in the PSPP, she had become a lot more reflective.

5. The inservice on supervision skills should be offered before the practicum and the principals should attend.

The need for early assistance with supervision skills was voiced repeatedly, and teachers liked the supervision cycle that they had learned. To them, it "fit with the school philosophy of demonstrating learning in that the student teacher does the talking about his or her teaching."

6. The professional development component of the PSPP should be continued for cooperating teachers. Sessions should be phased in and rotate from school to school.

Teachers were concerned about leaving the school so often to attend sessions at the other schools and several teachers felt "really guilty about the time; there was too much pulling apart." Yet they found the sessions to be very beneficial and thought that with a few organizational changes this aspect of the PSPP would be even more worthwhile.

7. The large number of student teachers provided a support system just as the cooperating teacher has with other staff members.

Because the teachers value the team approach, they appreciated having more than one student teacher in the school. They thought that this allowed for collaboration and enabled the student teachers to talk together about what they were doing .

8. We need to determine what the impact is on the rest of the staff who did not have student teachers.

The Birch cooperating teachers were aware of and concerned about the impact of the PSPP on their colleagues. As has been mentioned, the nature of the staff's interactions changed during the PSPP and the sense of being a team was more difficult to maintain. Teachers who were not involved in the PSPP felt that there was a problem with the principal's role within the PSPP: They thought that the demands on Kelly's time had detracted from the time that Kelly would normally spend with staff members, particularly with new teachers. Other teachers felt somewhat envious of the opportunities for professional development that the PSPP participants experienced. One teacher suggested that a "tri-partnership" could link a cooperating teacher, a student teacher and one other teacher on staff.

The student teachers' perceptions. Finally, the perceptions of the student teachers must be noted, for the outcome of the involvements and processes that the staff employed were visible in the growth and experiences of the student teachers. It was for them that the efforts of the Birch staff were expended. When asked about Kelly's approach to the practicum, the student teachers felt that:

> She was everything, the key. She greeted everyone every morning and she included us in everything. We had time twice a week to talk.
>
> Her reflection on what was happening was open; she told us what she would do differently in the practicum.
>
> She has such keen powers of observation.

> The school might not be the same without her talents to bring in all staff and their skills into one cohesive unit. Her philosophy holds the school together.

From the staff's approach to the PSPP and by modelling the behaviors of individual teachers, they learned about being a teacher. As a group they listed three significant learnings:

1. It is essential to develop and implement a philosophy of teaching.
2. As teachers, we are committed to the development of social-emotional and academic needs of the child.
3. We developed an awareness of the nature and the need for reflection.

When asked to determine what features of the practicum had been the most significant for them, the student teachers arrived at the following list:

1. Small group meetings and PD meetings.
2. Atmosphere of openness, sharing, support and the positive environment created by the cooperating teachers and the other staff.
3. The evaluation of the student teacher was focused towards growth and improvement.

Finally, in the thoughts and beliefs that were spoken by the student teachers at the end of the practicum can be seen the impact of Birch School's culture upon the student teachers and the influence that the staff's approach to the PSPP had upon their growth as teachers:

> All the new experiences were shared in a support network. We've learned that from the staff.
>
> The signs on the doors are TLG (Teaching-Learning Group) and they really believe that. There is constant cooperative learning. Everyone in the classroom is both a learner and a teacher.

> Teachers were made more aware of what they are doing. They also learned from us. They shared that with us, "Ya, I'm learning too."
>
> There are different expectations for each student. There's no label put on kids. Everyone is told and shown that they are unique individuals.
>
> The dignity of the student and the staff is important at all time. Every teacher is different, but the philosophy ties them together.
>
> The staff groups and discussions reinforce the philosophy. It would be noticeable if someone doesn't fit and then they would work toward it. They would be forced to think about it.
>
> The teachers lived and breathed their philosophy of team building and cooperation.
>
> The philosophy is the single most important thing I'll take away with me. I know now that it's not what I do, but why.

Ultimately, the student teachers' perceptions about the practicum acted as a "barometer" that indicated (a) the staff's focus on team-building and (b) the staff's belief that philosophy has to be meaningfully translated into practice.

The significance of these two themes and the implications that they have for the PSPP's continuation and expansion are discussed in the next chapter. This is preceded by a summary of the research findings which echo the student teachers' voices; the context of the school setting, the principles around which the PSPP' implementation was organized, and the processes that the staff utilized during the practicum were visible features of the PSPP experience.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion of the Research Project and Findings

Summary of the Findings

The Research Problem

The research was undertaken to describe one staff's approach to the PSPP and to come to an understanding of why they took such an approach.

The research questions. The first two research questions probed the nature of the certificated staff's involvement during the course of the project and the nature of individual teacher involvements as the PSPP unfolded. The last two research questions probed the factors and influences that had prompted those types of involvements, as well as the consequences of those involvements for individual teachers and the school. When the context and content of the change (described in Chapter Four) and the processes of the change (described in Chapter Five) are considered thematically, the outcomes of the change are apparent, as are the reasons why the Birch staff approached the change as they did.

Themes

Two themes highlight the approach that the staff and principal took as they adopted and implemented the PSPP. The first, working as a team, has been referred to throughout this text, particularly in the description of the

school context. The second, of matching practices with beliefs, formed the basis of the PSPP's implementation: Beliefs about learning were the organizing principles from which the events and happenings of the PSPP were planned. These themes, which are briefly highlighted in this summary, not only describe two critical elements of Birch School's culture, but illustrate the major influences upon the way that the staff approached the PSPP, and the consequences of that approach for individuals and the staff.

Working As a Team

The Birch staff believes that "Together We are Strong," and practices this belief by working as a team. During the PSPP, this theme was visible in the processes that the staff initiated to link and to communicate with the University and the other two schools, and within the school. As they linked and communicated, processes of interaction were initiated and continued, so that the collaborative nature of the PSPP became a reality. Situations arose that required accommodation, adaptation and flexibility; this was the approach that was taken by the Birch staff to solve problems and make decisions. The staff was aware of the PSPP's impact on the Birch team; teachers without student teachers felt somewhat left out, and the nature of the interactions between staff members changed. Yet, for the student teachers, the sense of collegiality that came with being a

member of the Birch team was a significant aspect of the practicum.

Matching Beliefs and Practices

The philosophy held by the Birch staff is one which outlines their beliefs about children and learning, and the staff continually ask themselves if their practices within the school match those beliefs. When the staff adopted and implemented the PSPP, the focus on matching practices and beliefs continued. Beliefs about learning were the organizing principles around which the events of the PSPP were planned and facilitated: Kelly, the school principal, played a key role in these processes, supported by Chris and other lead teachers at Birch, as well as by University and District personnel.

Typically the planning and facilitation was flexible and adaptive, as the Birch staff tried to ensure that these beliefs would be reflected in the events and happenings of the PSPP:

1. Learning is an active process, therefore people need involvements that are real.
2. All people can learn, therefore opportunities for learning must exist.
3. Each person is a unique individual, therefore ways to meet individual needs must be found.
4. People must experience challenge and success, therefore appropriate expectations must be set.

5. Learning involves the development of the individual, therefore individual growth must be fostered.
6. Even though learning is an individual process, it can be achieved in an environment of shared support.

Following the practicum, the participants were able to reflect upon their PSPP experiences, reconcile them with their beliefs, and plan for future practices. They saw that by working with student teachers, they had become more aware of their own teaching practices and of how they reflected their beliefs. They were able to consider their experiences and the progress that they felt had be made toward advancing the PSPP goals, and they recommended changes that would more appropriately address their beliefs about learning and their desire to work as a team.

These themes, which articulate the culture of Birch School and the norms of behaviour within it, illustrate the approach that the Birch staff took to the PSPP. However, the significance of these findings and the implications that they have for practice may not be so clear.

Like the participants in the research, who had an opportunity to reflect upon their PSPP experiences, the opportunity is taken in this chapter to discuss the research's design, its processes and the conceptualization that guided it. The implications of the research findings for the stakeholders and for research are then discussed, so

that the process of reflection that began as a goal of the PSPP, then became evident within the PSPP experience, is extended to provide a basis from which the PSPP's continuation can be explored.

Reflections About the Research

As an educator, my personal conception of educational change is that change is growth. Conscious decisions are made within the school and within the classroom to prompt changes within students, to help them to learn. It is an optimistic conception that carries with it the belief that individuals and groups of individuals can change things and if not make a difference in others' lives, at least, make a difference in the way that others' view their lives. I approached my role of researcher of a new practicum model with the same view: Change is inevitable and it is to be anticipated for the change process allows one to grow and develop.

Collaborating

Because I had most recently worked in a school where the staff was supportive and collaborative, it seemed natural to link with other educators who wished to do research in a supportive and collaborative manner. It was also natural to choose, as the setting for my research, a school which had a past history of involvement in collaborative projects. Just as Kelly felt that it was fortuitous timing for the PSPP to be initiated at a time

when Birch School was looking for a change and a more meaningful linking with the University, so too was it fortuitous as a researcher to have had the opportunity to observe the change process within a distinct kind of school environment. I welcomed the chance to investigate a topic of particular personal interest that allowed me to retain a measure of independence, yet experience the collegiality of a research team of like-minded individuals.

Designing the Research

Birch School's involvement in the PSPP provided an ideal opportunity to observe the change process and the impact that the school's culture had on the way in which the change was actualized. The research problem necessitated a qualitative methodology; I described the staff's approach so that I was able to arrive at an understanding of why they took that approach. As befits an interpretivist study, the research took place in the natural setting of the school and I, the researcher, was the key instrument of research. Observations, interviews and interactions allowed the individuals involved in the change process to share their own perspectives on the PSPP involvements. Ultimately, a grounded theory evolved.

The principal of Birch School and the teachers supported the idea of the research. There is a focus at Birch School on continuous and life-long learning; perhaps they saw the research as another way for them to learn about

themselves and about the school. Perhaps because theirs is a school that receives hundreds of visitors a year or perhaps because their school's culture is supportive and interactive, access to the school was granted and encouraged. Birch School seemed to welcome the research component of the PSPP just as they welcomed the partnership with the University for the practicum. Indeed, at times it appeared that the school staff regarded the researchers as a vital and accessible part of the University link.

Conducting the Research

After seeing to the ethical requirements of conducting research, I began the process of collecting data at pre-practicum meetings. However, when the practicum began, my role in the PSPP took on a new significance. To fulfill my assistantship duties as a faculty consultant with the Field Experiences Office, I was assigned to the PSPP to act in whatever capacity the school might determine was needed during the practicum period. I had a dual role within the PSPP, as a researcher and as an active participant. Maintaining separate focuses meant keeping each role's responsibilities clearly in mind.

As determined by Birch's principal and teachers, I observed student teachers in the classroom, shared perceptions about their classroom performances with the cooperating teachers and Kelly, and generally was a "sounding-board" for student and cooperating teachers who

wished to talk specifically about the skills that the student teachers were working on. Because of this role, I was in the school on a regular basis and was able to attend a large number of the PSPP events.

Reconciling my role as a University assistant with my role of researcher meant keeping my problem statement clearly in mind, recording and identifying personal biases as the research progressed, and at all times maintaining the ethical requirements of each role. My fears that being assigned to the school might compromise my situation as a researcher were unfounded, for in my attempt to maintain the research's credibility, I became more aware of exploring any apparent assumptions and biases. I found, too, that the rapport established with the staff by the frequency and nature of my visits enabled me to obtain a large number of staff members' perceptions and a "thick" description of PSPP events. As well, peer debriefing and participant review confirmed that my understandings were credible.

Conceptualizing

The change process. My conceptualization of the change process was formed through experience and an exploration of the literature on school change. I found that the change process can be approached as a rational process that involves the careful research of an innovation and a planned strategy for its diffusion into the schools (Havelock, 1973): If teachers are convinced of the benefits of the

change, they will implement it. Yet, as I continued to explore the literature and conduct this research, my sense that the change process is not quite so rational or linear was confirmed: For individuals involved in change, there is a personal meaning and if that meaning is not considered, the incorporation of the change is less likely (Fullan, 1982). Birch School believes that individuals are important; the constant communication and interaction between those involved in implementing the PSPP ensured that it was meaningful to individuals.

Much of the literature relates to planned change where the innovation is conceived outside of the school, with the school targeted as the site for implementation. It is clear that certain factors can then contribute to the success of planned change efforts. The school setting and the processes that the school staff experience as the change is being implemented have an effect on the eventual outcomes and continuation of the change. The features of the innovation can be adapted to fit the school setting, just as the school staff can adjust their practices to adapt to the innovation. For this to happen, involvement at the school setting is essential: Staff development opportunities, school-site problem solving and decision making, and the commitment of school principals and teachers are all important for the successful implementation of change (McLaughlin, 1976; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978). At Birch School, such adaptation was clearly visible.

Yet, even when planned change strategies involve the school in determining the direction that implementation will take, the fact remains that the source of the change comes from outside of the school, and that a certain degree of fidelity to the change is expected. Birch's participation in the PSPP seemed to prompt school-site adaptations but the fidelity of the University-initiated change appeared to be ensured by the compatibility of philosophy and beliefs between the two organizations and the other schools. Typically, too, planned change in education is of the first-order type: Changes to the organization's structure and the beliefs that underpin that structure are seldom contemplated (Cuban, 1988). The PSPP (as an alternative practicum model that requires a different kind of school structure) might appear to be a second-order change for those schools that have not been involved in the kind of "renewing" process that matching practices with beliefs entails. I have the sense that when beliefs and values are the point at which the school considers action, second-order changes are more likely to be initiated. In this case, the culture of Birch School was able to support the PSPP.

School culture. From sociological roots and from a human resources perspective has come the view that a school will exhibit norms of behaviour and hold common beliefs and values that make it a distinct culture (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1988; Owens, 1987). There are shared values and understandings that bond individuals within the school and

cause them to act in certain ways. Strong school cultures appear to be those which are supportive, interactive, and secure so that experimentation is fostered (Corbett, Dawson & Firestone, 1984; Little, 1982; Morrish, 1976; Schiffer, 1980; Wideen & Andrews, 1984). These descriptors seem to apply to Birch School where the "team concept" created a support system and the beliefs were shared.

Sarason (1982) notes that those who make changes within schools first need to understand the culture of the school's setting, for the culture of the school setting will have an impact on change efforts. It seems that at Birch, engaged as it is in the process of articulating the beliefs that they hold and of how those beliefs can be put into practice, the change process is ever-present and on-going. At the same time, the Birch staff is receptive to new ideas that can be incorporated through this process.

It has been said that a strong school culture operates from an autonomous center and, as such, can be the source from which change is initiated (Schmuck, 1984; Sirotnik, 1989). It is apparent, too, that a school with an interactive and supportive culture will seek interaction and support from other systems and sources. This was visible at Birch, for they had been involved in collaborative projects in the past, but when they felt that the partnership was not fulfilling their needs they acted from an autonomous center to seek other options. They remained open to change, regardless of whether that change was school-based or was

initiated elsewhere. What was more important was the quality of the change, its compatibility with the school, and the opportunities that the change brought with it.

Significance of the Findings: School Culture and Change

I undertook the research with the assumption that the implementation of the PSPP, as an innovative and collaborative practicum model, would have an effect upon the staff at the school site and that individuals and the entire staff would be adapting to the changed nature of the practicum. I also assumed that features of the school's culture, such as staff norms, beliefs, attitudes and understandings would influence the way that the staff would approach the PSPP and that these same features might be influenced by the PSPP's presence. What I did not anticipate was the extent to which these assumptions would be borne out as the PSPP was actualized. It is clear that the school's culture not only influenced the nature of the PSPP, but that the staff's approach within the new practicum structure was what made it an innovative and collaborative endeavor.

The PSPP Change

The PSPP was designed as an interactive and collegial model for socializing teachers into the profession. In its linking there were opportunities for change and growth for all stakeholders. It seemed that the type of school setting

into which this model was initiated played a major role in actualizing the vision for a new, alternative practicum experience: The University sought and initiated a partnership or link with schools that are considered to be creative, innovative and collegial. They are schools with fine reputations, schools which are actively working to develop their cultures, schools which seem to embrace growth and change. It appears that with Birch's approach to the PSPP, the link between the strength of a school's culture and its propensity for change has been made.

Cultural Cement

It has been said that "cultural cement" bonds an organization (Sergiovanni et al., 1987). The organization is held together by the beliefs, understandings, and values that the staff share and these are made visible through the practices of the staff; norms of behaviour reflect the organization's shared philosophy. There is a common approach to problems and group members are committed to the attainment of the organization's goals. Schools with strong cultural cement are those that are focused, interactive, supported and secure, and such schools typically foster experimentation within a collaborative setting (Little, 1982). They exhibit a desire for continued growth, and possess a propensity for change.

Birch School stands as distinct culture, for it (a) operates with a clearly defined philosophy and a set of

beliefs about learning and children and (b) from these beliefs, and through specific actions, certain norms of behaviour have been established.

Building a Culture

Kelly and the Birch staff have actively worked to develop and define their school's culture; indeed, "culture building", as an articulated goal of the school, might be considered to be a school-initiated improvement strategy. Barth (1990) says that "what needs to be improved about schools is their culture" (p. 45). Birch School has taken this to heart.

The focus on "culture building" seems to parallel a process of organizational development whereby the group examines their plans, goals and actions, and is able to describe their school's norms, structures and procedures (Runkel & Schmuck, 1984). Birch School appears to be a "strongly cohesive group in which members share understandings of their purposes, norms, skills and resources" (Runkel & Schmuck, p. 158). Heckman (1987) feels that there is a need to create a renewing culture in which the school is the unit for improvement: In the process of making their beliefs explicit, examining those beliefs, and initiating practices that match their beliefs, the Birch staff appears to be building and renewing their school's culture.

For schools engaged in such a process, Schmuck (1984) provides a goal to work toward. His construct of the "Autonomous School," a cooperative school culture, provides an interesting basis from which to highlight Birch School's culture-building focus. Like the "Autonomous School", there is at Birch an emphasis on developing norms of collaboration, risk-taking and continuous learning for the staff, as well as on creating processes for open communication, power-sharing, and self-reflective monitoring. As Birch School builds its culture, it appears to be cementing the bonds which hold it together.

Creating Cultural Cement

There appear to be two main ingredients in the cultural cement that bonds Birch School, for these were the ingredients in the way that the staff approached the PSPP. It seems that the same processes that are used to build culture are also those that supported the PSPP change, giving credence to the conceptualization of change as growth.

First, as the findings indicate, there is a very strong focus at Birch on matching beliefs and practices. This concept is at the heart of the organization and it permeates and directs the day to day language and actions of the staff. This focus is critical to their "raison d'être"; the staff shares beliefs that pertain to students and the principles of learning. However, the principles of learning

around which their school is structured are only given meaning if the staff puts those beliefs into action so that their practices are matched with their with beliefs.

It seems only natural, then, that the principles around which the implementation of the PSPP was organized also stressed the beliefs that the school holds about learning. The philosophy of the PSPP and the school were reflected in the kinds of learning opportunities that the student and cooperating teachers experienced, so that the culture-building efforts of the staff continued to be enhanced. Barth indicates that a community of learners is "committed above all to discovering conditions that elicit and support human learning and to providing these conditions" (Barth, 1990, p. 45). The common basis for organizing the PSPP seemed to contribute to the growth of a community of learners and the actualization of a shared vision within the school.

The second ingredient in Birch's cultural cement is a strong focus on working as a team. This belief shapes the processes through which the staff actualizes their beliefs about children and learning and the way in which the staff functions within the organizational community. The desire to work as a team directly affects the processes that the staff employs to communicate, interact, plan and facilitate, make decisions and solve problems so that these processes were naturally extended when the staff implemented the PSPP. The PSPP meant that the school had to expand the team to

include the University faculty, the student teachers and the researchers, and it seemed that the strength of this ingredient was that which was tested most often.

Together these two bonding ingredients make Birch School a distinct culture of shared beliefs and common approaches. The implementation of the PSPP was supported by the "cultural cement's" strength of belief, yet adapted through the elasticity or flexibility of the staff's processes. It was organized around strong beliefs about learning and actualized by processes that allowed the staff to work as a team. The mixture is significant, for it carries with it implications for the continuation of the PSPP at Birch, for the expansion of the project by the University to other school sites, and for the creation of similar types of partnership projects elsewhere.

Implications of the Findings

The Role of the School

In general terms, the findings reinforce for school staffs the significant role that matching beliefs to practices and the concept of working as a team plays in building and strengthening a school's culture. The processes that the Birch staff employed within the school are indicative of a school that supports norms of collaboration and experimentation; schools such as this are able to initiate and support change. The staff's attempts to match their practices with their beliefs during the PSPP

affirmed the importance of self-reflection and inquiry as a means to school renewal.

The PSPP was a learning situation designed to socialize new teachers into the profession and while it might seem obvious, it bears repeating that to successfully implement learning experiences it is necessary to hold strong beliefs about learning which recognize that (a) all people can learn, (b) people must experience challenge and success, (c) learning is an active process, (d) learning is an individual process, (e) each person is a unique individual, and (f) learning involves the development of the individual. To extend the learning process further, the implications of the findings for various roleplayers within the school can be considered, keeping in mind that each role interacts and influences the actions of the others' in the school and within the Partnership.

The role of the administration. It is clear that the principal plays an important role in programs of this type. Certainly the principal is in a position to show commitment and support for the program if it fits with the school's philosophy and beliefs and to provide the school staff with an overall picture of the form that the practicum can take in the school. It appears that the principal needs to be actively involved in implementing the practicum model; this can involve processes such as communicating and interacting with the University and within the school, working with other administrators to plan and facilitate learning

experiences for the student and cooperating teachers, monitoring the project, solving problems and making decisions. It appears that projects such as this, which involve so many stakeholders, require a flexible, adaptable and participatory approach.

The principal also plays a major role in shaping the student teachers' philosophies. At Birch, Kelly did this by meeting with the student teachers on a regular basis to explore the beliefs that they held about children and learning and by discussing how the beliefs could be put into practice. Thus, the educational leadership that the principal typically provides for the school staff can be extended to the student teachers. At Birch, this meant that the principal was involved in planning and facilitating PD opportunities and leading staff meetings (which included student teachers) where school beliefs and practices were examined.

It is clear that the principal will be involved in providing real experiences for the student teachers. The principal is responsible for supervising and evaluating the entire school staff; he or she will also play this role with student teachers. At the same time, it is apparent that fulfilling the traditional faculty consultant's role is unrealistic: School principals do not have time to provide a weekly schedule of classroom supervision for up to ten additional staff members. With the cooperating teachers and the University, the principal will need to structure the

supervision component of the practicum so that while he or she is aware of each student teacher's performance in the classroom, facilitating the growth of the student teacher as a staff member becomes the principal's prime supervision objective.

When implementing this type of school-based practicum, the importance of the principal's role cannot be underestimated for not only is the principal involved in the practicum itself, but he or she is also involved in the implementation of change and as such needs to understand the nature of the change process. The principal can provide a philosophical, professional, and physical commitment to the project, be aware of the impact that the project will have on the entire staff and school, and be able to play a major role in the planning and facilitation of the practicum. However, the importance of the principal's involvement does not imply that he or she must assume all of the responsibilities that projects such as this entail. To truly work as a team within a system of participatory leadership, responsibilities can be assumed by other role players.

The role of the cooperating teacher. The strength of the learning experiences for the student teachers lay partly in their group meetings for PD and discussion, but also in the individual relationship that was achieved with their cooperating teacher. It was found that the cooperating teachers' key role in the practicum is in structuring and

implementing the supervision cycle so that the student teachers can learn. It was also found that teachers need to learn how to be cooperating teachers.

Clinical supervision sessions can provide teachers with the knowledge, the terminology and the processes to help student teachers to learn. At Birch, the cooperating teachers found the clinical supervision inservices to be helpful, but they also found that they came too late in the practicum, coming as they did during weeks five and seven. It appeared they might have been offered to cooperating teachers prior to, or at the beginning of, the practicum. At the sessions, the Birch teachers were introduced to the skills that one needs to work with student teachers, but it seems that developing these skills requires more than one or two sessions.

The cooperating teachers felt that working with the student teachers was a learning experience and it became necessary for them to break down the skills implicit to their own teaching so that the skills could be defined, modelled and coached; they needed to be made explicit for the student teachers. Ackerman and Perkins (1989) indicate that the learning of new skills and content can be either tightly-coupled, where a skill is taught within a particular content area, or loosely-coupled, where a skill is taught but not linked to any content area. Similarly, the development of skills can be either implicit or explicit.

> In implicit skills integration, activities are planned that require students to use the skills deemed important, but the teacher does not present lessons on the skills and students do not do assignments whose main purpose is skill building. . . . In explicit skills integration, the skills are taught formally; that is, they are identified, defined, modeled, and coached. (Ackerman & Perkins, 1989, p. 89)

It appears that being a teacher does not necessarily mean that one can identify and then teach explicitly those teaching skills that are implicitly held.

In this context, Joyce and Shower's (1982) peer coaching model might be considered. This model outlines four fundamentals that are essential for the transfer of knowledge into continued practice. There must be: (a) an understanding of the theory behind the concept or new strategy; (b) opportunities to observe the skill being modelled or demonstrated by relative experts; (c) many opportunities to practice and use the skill with feedback provided; and (d) coaching, for mastery of the new strategy and transfer into the (student) teacher's repertoire. Through the use of this type of model, teaching skills can be made explicit for student teachers. Peer coaching is compatible with school cultures where norms of continuous learning and experimentation are supported, but it is possible, too, that upon initiating such a model, supported risk-taking that is directed at the improvement of practice can become the norm.

Encompassed within the supervision cycle is the role that cooperating teachers perform to (a) evaluate student teachers and (b) develop reflectiveness within student

teachers. If the needs of the student teacher and the learning process are considered holistically, it appears that the supervision model can incorporate both of these objectives.

Because of the Birch staff's beliefs about how people learn, they approached evaluation as a formative process: "Growth-oriented" midterm evaluations, which noted individualized goals and actions plans and which stressed the learning or growth that had been achieved, were created in consultation with the principal and curriculum coordinator. It appears that further discussion at the school level and with the University could explore ways in which the supervision component of the PSPP can continue to be formative and collaborative.

Also as part of the learning process, cooperating teachers attempted to develop "reflectiveness" in the student teachers through modelling and through the use of reflective journals. Within the broader parameters of the supervis[illegible] role, cooperating teachers could explore the ways in which a variety of tools can be utilized to develop "reflectiveness" in the student teachers. It is possible that the University and the school principal can play a meaningful role in this exploration as well.

It was found that the Birch teachers are encouraged to become leaders and to share their strengths with others. A belief in shared leadership might prompt schools to explore and pursue ways in which the cooperating teachers' roles

during the PSPP can reflect this belief; for example, Birch's curriculum coordinator shared her expertise in unit planning and in developing pro-social skills. It is possible that teachers can provide leadership in areas of strength so that responsibilities are shared, the practicum experience reflects the unique nature of each school staff, and the variety of roles that teachers play in schools is more fully modelled for student teachers.

The role of the school staff. The findings showed that the PSPP had an impact on staff members who did not have student teachers: The nature and frequency of the interactions between PSPP participants and other staff members were noticeably different, and it was more difficult to maintain the team concept. Kelly and the staff were aware of this and, as the project continues, they are considering how the PSPP can become more meaningful for all of the staff.

Henshaw, Wilson, and Morefield (1987) discuss the implications of fragmented school-improvement attempts where specific programs that involve only some of the teaching staff are introduced to schools. They feel that there is a need to look at all perspectives and to consider the entire school for "the key for unlocking sustained improvement lies in the capacity of the entire school community for change" (p. 136). To illustrate their point, they provide the example of a "gifted" program that was introduced to only some of the teachers within a school. It had all of the

requirements for effective implementation: Like the PSPP at Birch, the program had the principal's endorsement and support, and there were opportunities for staff development and teacher initiative. However, a polarization developed between the innovative program and the traditional program and after a few years the momentum for the "gifted" program was lost. While this may seem like an extreme comparison in that the PSPP occurs for only a portion of the school year, the implication is clear.

The PSPP does have an impact on the rest of the staff and if it remains somewhat distinct from the rest of the staff, it is possible that it will not continue to be supported. School staffs should be aware that the nature and extent of the entire staff's involvement needs to be considered. Whether supervision as a collaborative model extends to other teachers, PD opportunities are offered to or shared within the entire staff, or the practicum is adjusted so that "teaming-up" and classroom intervisitations provide broad school-based experiences for the student teachers, it is clear that, for its continuation, the PSPP needs to be made meaningful to all staff members.

The Role of the University

Because the PSPP is a partnership, the implications of the findings for the role of the school are also implications for the University faculty members' consideration and participation. As they contemplate the

University's role and the nature of its involvement in the continuation of the PSPP at the existing sites, the following additional points may be of interest.

The PSPP was conceived as a school-based, collaborative endeavor to develop reflective teachers within a supportive environment. Clearly, the culture of Birch School supported these goals, but as the project continues, so too can the University and the school develop meaningful ways in which the school can be supported within the Partnership. One key area of support that was provided during the PSPP was in the PD component of the program. The Birch staff seemed to perceive the University's role as mainly one of access to ideas and professional development, and the University seemed to be accommodative and flexible in responding to school-based decisions about the types of PD that were offered.

As the practicum progressed, the cooperating teachers realized that they needed assistance with supervision skills and on how to develop reflectiveness within their student teachers, so they took advantage of the expertise that the University could offer in these areas. Yet they thought that the sessions came too late in the program. An important implication for the professional development component of the program is that, while PD offerings can be determined at the school level, the University has a background of experience and knowledge about the type of assistance and the kinds of learning opportunities that

student teachers and cooperating teachers need. If the PSPP is truly a partnership, then the strengths of all of the role players can be accessed. University faculty members can indicate the kinds of PD that cooperating and student teachers have benefitted from in the past and continue to provide leadership in these areas.

Together, the school and the University can determine whether the focus for PD will be curriculum-based (as with the math sessions), process-based (dealing with processes for developing reflectiveness and supervision skills), or a combination of the two. It is possible that, by discussing the University's role of facilitating professional development within the school, the broader issue, of what the University's meaningful role in the Partnership is, or can be, will be explored.

Translating that role into action requires certain processes, and the processes that were used during the PSPP included interacting, communicating, planning, and facilitating. At Birch, the belief in "team" and the idea of "partnership" was valued but it seemed that the nature of the University-school link was determined by processes that had not been fully developed between the University and school. The findings illustrate how important these processes were within the school and, as the project continues, they imply the necessity for developing and utilizing these processes within the Partnership. By establishing procedures for regular communication and

interaction, the broader issue of creating a balance between the University's involvement in planning and facilitating, with the school's need for flexibility and adaptability, can be mutually explored.

Expanding the Project and The Role of Research

The philosophy and goals of the PSPP, to develop reflective teachers within a collaborative setting, were compatible with, and supported by, the culture of Birch School: At Birch, beliefs about learning created opportunities for reflection and a desire to work as a team prompted collaboration. It is clear that both the nature of the change process (seen in the way that the program was approached at the school site) and the culture of the school (as evidenced by the staff's beliefs and practices) will influence the direction of the project's expansion.

Birch School is a distinct and unique school culture and because of this the approach that the staff took to the PSPP was distinct and possibly unique. It is likely that, as the project is expanded to other distinct kinds of school settings, different approaches, prompted by each school's beliefs, will be taken. With the expansion of the project different issues, for both the stakeholders and for research, will be raised.

The implications of the findings contained herein can be considered, along with corresponding issues for contemplation and research, when expanding the project to:

1. Schools whose beliefs are not as fully articulated, or do not appear to be as compatible with the goals of the PSPP as Birch's appeared to be, or where strong beliefs about learning are not held: What impact will the presence of the University Partnership have upon the school's culture, and similarly, what impact will the school's culture have upon the PSPP?
2. Schools whose cultures do not seem to support collaborative practices and where the team approach is not as visible: What will be the nature of a school-based program in this kind of setting?
3. Schools where the administration does not play an obvious role in providing educational leadership and where participatory leadership is not as apparent: Will the PSPP model and the support of the University influence the way that the principal's role is approached?
4. Smaller or larger schools: What are the implications of having fewer or more staff members, upon the level of involvement that the entire staff experiences and the concept of "team"?
5. Schools which do not appear to be innovative and whose cultures do not seem to support experimentation and risk-taking: What influence will the PSPP model have upon the norms of behaviour and the staff processes that are apparent within the school setting?

6. Schools that are not actively engaged in an on-going process of reflection where beliefs and practices are examined: What role will the PSPP play in developing the reflective practitioner and in renewing the school's culture?
7. Schools that have not had links or been involved in partnerships in the past: What approach will be taken by the University and the school to develop philosophical, professional, personal and physical links?

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address, or even to raise, all of the issues that are associated with the PSPP and the implications of the findings which show that a school's culture will influence the way that projects such as the PSPP are initiated and implemented. It is anticipated, however, that as the project continues and expands, stakeholders and other interested parties will utilize these research findings to explore the role that all educators play in fostering change.

Conclusion

As an educator, change does mean growth. Within the classroom, the teacher holds a broad vision for the growth or learning of the child. This vision becomes practicable through a process whereby it is broken down into smaller parts called goals, and pieces, which are the objectives. Both the content of the learnings and the processes that are

utilized as this learning takes place are held together by the conceptual strands that permeate and span the boundaries of the curriculum. Typically a representation of the learning is created and the student's product becomes much more than a song, a report or a diorama. It is a symbol that the vision is one step closer to reality.

Just as educators share a vision, plan and implement the means to achieve it, and then reflect upon the outcomes or consequences, so too did the participants in the PSPP. They began with a shared vision of what the practicum program could be. They planned, they implemented and they reflected upon their experiences. The events of the PSPP were shaped by the processes of the staff; holding them together were their beliefs so that in their practices they worked as a team. Just as a teacher attempts to meet student needs, so too did the course followed during the PSPP's adoption and implementation attempt to meet the needs of the participants at Birch School.

For these stakeholders, the vision has not yet been achieved but it has become much clearer. By approaching the change of the PSPP as they did, as educators who conceptualized and experienced the learning process, they have seen a restructured practicum develop within an atmosphere of meaningful linking between the University and school. Yet, as educators who reflect upon their practices, they see, too, that the continuation of the PSPP at their school will involve even more growth and change. In light

of the approach taken thus far by the Birch staff, it is anticipated that they will continue to search for different and more meaningful ways to put their beliefs into practice as they help to create the practicum vision.

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