School Advisor's Beliefs About Their Roles and Practices Within a Cohort Grouping

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Abstract

This study focuses on the nature of the school advisor's roles within a collaborative educational setting, specifically, a partnership involving a school district, university and teachers association referred to as the Richmond Teacher Education Project. The study investigates how school advisors view their roles and responsibilities within a cohort group. School advisors describe their experiences according to role, motivations, preparation and training, improvements to the program and professional/ethical considerations.

Findings from the study indicate that the role development of school advisors is dependent on the amount of time spent as a member of the Richmond Practicum Project and on the relationship-building process between the student teachers and other members of the cohort grouping. All subjects mention some difficulty in their role as the primary evaluator and believed that the faculty advisor should share this role.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

A few years back I was entering my beginning year of Teacher Education at the University of British Columbia. At our orientation, I was informed of my placement. I was one of a group of students who would take part in "the Richmond Project"—a collaborative teacher education partnership between the University of British Columbia, the Richmond School District, and the Richmond Teacher’s Association. While most of the other students were offered a more individually-based practicum placement I was left wondering how I was chosen for this project and if this was some experimental venture on the university’s part which would leave me at a disadvantage among other student teachers. When I inquired as to how I was chosen for the Richmond Project, I was informed that it was a "name out of a hat" type of random choosing.

I was quickly immersed in academic life on campus and forgot about the practicum for a while. In the meantime, I attended classes with a small group of students, who were also project members. As we were thrust together, with group assignments, peer assessments, sharing our reflective journals; the initial competitive feelings, which occur among many university students, began to be replaced with feelings of camaraderie and team building. We shared a common bond—we would be thrown into a strange situation together and would have to share private and perhaps uncomfortable scenarios as we took our rites of passage as teachers. We had no choice—we all became friendly and supportive.

Unknown to me were the details of the Richmond Project. I would be visiting a school for eight half days and would remain at this school site for my practica—a two
week practicum in January and a thirteen week practicum from March to June. A team of school advisors at the school would be assembled and assigned to each member of our student teacher team. Their responsibility would be to supervise the student teachers during their practicum. The faculty advisor would play a facilitating role and the school advisor would be the primary evaluator over this time. A major focus here and a distinguishing feature would be that we would continue to function as a cohort--school advisors and student teachers within the school--throughout the duration of the practicum. Along with each student teacher came funding—of up to $300 provided from the university, up to $300 from the Richmond School Board, and one half day planning time by the Richmond Teachers Association. One-third of these funds were to be spend on professional development shared by all the schools participating in the Richmond Project and two thirds on school-based professional development decided upon by the teacher/student teams in each school.

And so the time came. A nervous group of beginning teachers arrived at the schools supported by their faculty advisor, each determined to prove themselves worthy of teaching and becoming a teacher. The expectations were great--we needed to build relationships with these people--all of them--and keep them throughout the year. The school advisors and the rest of the school seemed calm, friendly and prepared to accept us into their school.

Now came a difficult task--we were to be assigned to individual school advisors. Each student teacher rotated among the participating classes for the eight day orientation experience and observed each school advisor in their classroom. School advisors were also given our profile sheets to study. Both the student teachers and the school advisors
would submit, in private, their choice of school advisor and classroom to the faculty advisor. The faculty advisor would do her best to match us up accordingly. I remember thinking, “how do I choose one without offending the others?” After all, I had to continue to have relationships with the whole staff for the rest of the school year. Other thoughts that I had were “What do they want from me?”; “Which hat do I put on?”

Like a group of young school children about to meet their teacher for the first time, my fellow student teachers and I were not that different on our first day of practicum. We had all heard about and discussed stories of practica ‘gone wrong’—school advisors who had failed their students, personality clashes, school advisors who would not give over classroom responsibility to their student teachers, to name a few. I was reluctant to reveal my concerns so readily. And remember thinking at the time, that “after working so hard this far and being in control of my educational decisions, I hope my school advisor is capable of assuming her responsibilities as an advisor and has the training and expertise that I would expect from any of my university instructors.” There was definitely an element of the unknown here which made me uncomfortable.

This is where my wondering ended. I never looked back. My school advisor was all I could have hoped for. Although some may not have liked her tactics, she and I had similar philosophies. She allowed me the freedom to experiment at my own pace, welcomed my questions and did her best to answer some difficult ones about her practice. She did not have all the answers herself, and when she was not comfortable or unsure she went to her group of school advisors or the faculty advisor with her questions. For that I was grateful.
However, pairings do not always work out so well. On my practicum we observed these tensions--two personalities and philosophies clashing. There was no failure here. Each group of school advisors and student teachers supported the party involved, each understood that they learned in different ways and with a lot of support and intervention each moved on in a professional and ethical way. In this instance, the nature of the cohort groupings and the support given throughout the Practicum Project dealt fittingly with successes as well as potential problems.

By being involved as a group member, my fellow student teachers and I were able to share our experiences with each other and it became obvious to us that teaching was not prescriptive and that we were each demanding different things from our practicum. This insight was very redeeming to the project. We were not isolated in one classroom. We were able to observe different teaching styles in different classrooms and therefore did not have preconceived notions of classroom life instead we were able to witness different learners in different environments. I feel that this has helped those of us who have been involved in cohort groupings in teacher education. These experiences have indeed contributed to our skills and competencies as student teachers and team teachers.

Fast forward three years, I am now a teacher for the Richmond School District and am now in a unique position to observe and study the roles of the school advisor in the Richmond Practicum Project. My interests are linked, as is the very triadic partnership that comprises the project--the school, the university and the student teacher. As a fellow teacher in the Richmond School District I can relate to my colleagues and understand the nature and spirit of our School district. As a past participant of the Richmond Practicum Project I am able to relate to the questions which are on the minds of student teachers--
those questions related to the role the school advisor plays in their teaching and how this is reflected in the practice of the student teacher. Also having been through the phases and expectations of the program lends itself to an integral understanding of my topic. Finally, and most importantly to this study, I can bring all my past and present roles to my current role as researcher with my prior knowledge serving as a frame and a common link to the school advisors who are the focus of this study. By being a stakeholder in both areas of this partnership, I feel that I am better able to understand and report on the roles and responsibilities which school advisors believe they have in a cohort grouping like the Richmond Practicum Project.

1.0 Purpose of the Study

From past literature, we can compile a list of prerequisites, recommendations and essential elements that enable a collaborative educational program to run successfully. A review of this literature will provide as the background for this inquiry. School advisors are those teachers responsible for supervising a student teacher for the duration of their practicum in the schools. School advisors are also known as cooperating teachers, sponsor teachers, mentors, and associate teachers. The present study will focus on the nature of the school advisor's roles within a collaborative educational setting, specifically, a school district, university, and teachers association partnership referred to as the Richmond Teacher Education Project. The study will investigate how school advisors view their roles and responsibilities within a cohort group.
The questions, which provide focus for the study, are:

1.10 *What are Richmond Project school advisors' perceptions of their role within the collaborative cohort model?*

1.11 *What was the nature of the school advisors' experiences within the collaborative cohort model?*

### 1.1 Rationale for the Study

The school advisor is the vital link in the operation of teacher-training programs. In fact, studies have shown that the school advisor is the most important component of effective practicum supervision (Clarke, 1997; Glickman & Bey, 1990). A recent survey from the British Columbia College of Teachers interviewed graduates of provincial teacher education programs, 93% of respondents indicated that the practicum component was the most important part of their program (Echols & Eastman, 1998). This emphasis has been confirmed in the literature. Many studies have outlined necessary roles and responsibilities which school advisors require to become competent supervisors of pre-service teachers (Clarke, 1997; Rust, 1988; Tsui, 1995). In fact, this is one area where collaborative models differ, in their expectations of the school advisor's role. Are school advisors aware of their many roles and multi-faceted responsibilities? Does this affect the quality of collaborative educational training programs and more importantly, the initial field experiences of the student teacher? From these and other studies a rich and complex picture of practicum experience and its role in teacher education emerges.

The literature speaks of theoretical frameworks where collaborative thought originated, what supervision is, and its role in such a setting. It has also highlighted concerns and factors which can influence the school environment and thus the practicum experience of the student teacher. Researchers have also discussed issues of socialization...
and its impact on the triad. As it has been determined, there are many factors which place the school advisor at the center of these issues.

Within the literature exists a gap; almost non-existent is how school advisors define the role expected of them and how they understand that role in partnerships such as the Richmond Teacher Education Project. Do school advisors understand and accept the roles and responsibilities which research deems essential to successful school-based teacher education? School advisors are responsible for monitoring, guiding, and assessing the progress of the student teacher; however, little is known about how they understand and carry out this duty or about the impact of their supervisory work on teacher education. For the school advisors in the Richmond Project, the expectations are numerous. Within a collaborative framework, do they understand those expectations?

1.2 Rationale for the Setting

A collaborative teacher education model was chosen as the setting to conduct this study because it is indicative of trends in teacher education currently in use and represents popular thoughts as well as theories of inquiry-oriented teacher education held today. By using the Richmond Project as an example of a cohort grouping, I was able to gain access to the triadic partnership—school, university, and the school district—and inquire into the role, relationships and expectations of the school advisor. Interviews conducted with school advisors and supplemented with interviews by those who hold dual positions in the Project provided a well-rounded look into such roles and the nature of the cohort grouping which is unique to the project. It is hoped that these findings will have a clear effect on the premise behind collaborative models of education where the school advisor plays such an essential role.
1.3 Overview of the Study

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one introduces and briefly outlines the study in terms of its purpose, rationale and context. Chapter two reviews relevant literature on collaborative educational models, theories of supervision, and the role of the school advisor which informed the analysis of data for this study. Chapter three describes the methodology of the study including the research design and method of analysis where six school advisors in a school-university partnership were interviewed about their perceptions of their role. In Chapter four the perceptions of the participants will be coded and categorized for common themes and patterns. These themes and patterns will then be analyzed and in Chapter five conclusions will be presented and discussed, limitations of the study will be considered and recommendations will be made for practice and further research.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This literature review will highlight research in the areas of collaborative educational settings, theories and types of supervision, and will include research involving the role of the school advisor. This chapter reviews research on collaborative educational settings, supervision and the role of school advisors within a preservice setting with the exception of research by Gordon (1992), Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993), and Waite (1994) who discuss supervision within its theoretical contexts. It is hoped that a review of the literature in this area, will provide a basis for further investigation into the perceived roles of the school advisor and its effects on collaborative models of teacher education.

Special emphasis is placed on Blaine Després (1996) preliminary report detailing the history of the Richmond Project between 1992-1996. As this was the setting where research was conducted, his report is integral to the understanding of the beginnings of this school-based teacher education model and its development over the years. Since the Richmond School District supports both collaborative and individually-based teacher education models, I believe this allows for the examination of the role development of a group of teachers who follow the same principles of learning and have guidelines in common as a district. The three principles of learning are:

1. Learning requires the active participation of the learner.
2. People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.
3. Learning is both an individual and social process.
Before examining differences there are important similarities. From Després’ preliminary investigation, I was better able to begin my investigation of how school advisors view their role within a collaborative setting.

2.1 Current Definitions of Collaboration

Collaboration is a concept that has become widely used as a model for teacher education training today. Collaborative education, or school-based teacher education, is a mutually supportive relationship between a school and university to provide continuity in field experiences in teacher education. Unlike the lab schools of the past, partner schools and the university specify objectives and conditions for cooperation between the university and the elementary or secondary school, and set a time period for the cooperative agreement (Irvin, 1990). Also, the inclusion of the Richmond Teachers Association as one of the partners was a distinguishing feature of this particular partnership.

2.2 Theories of Supervision

While many researchers and writers agree that the process of supervision involves working with teachers to improve instruction, there is much disagreement about which process or model of supervision should be employed (Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Gordon, 1992; May & Zimpher, 1986). Glickman and Bey (1990), attempt to enhance our understanding of supervision, stating that “the definition of instructional supervision in school settings is much broader than the definition of supervision in preservice settings, which tends to be limited to a university supervisor and cooperating teacher working with a student teacher (p.549).”
Paradigms are said to mark the evolution of new belief systems. These shifts do not emerge suddenly but begin slowly when an "old paradigm" is not working (Gordon, 1992; Waite, 1994). Gordon (1992) proposes that such a paradigm shift is taking place within educational supervision. He states that "the old supervision" is becoming less effective in schools today and thus there is a call for a "new supervision" (p.64). He outlines the shift as occurring in six transitions

• Transition 1: represents a change in belief systems, one, which moves from a means of controlling teachers behaviors to one, which embraces teacher empowerment. In this case, the supervisor becomes a mentor instead of a controller.
• Transition 2: the new supervision views curricular and instructional leadership activities as interrelated.
• Transition 3: accepts diversity in conjunction with empowerment and thus denies that there is a single approach to instruction or supervision, which can be applied to teachers.
• Transition 4: recognizes the concept of a peer support network as a means for teachers to receive support and assistance on an ongoing basis.
• Transition 5: replaces scientific methods of teacher research with professional inquiry where teachers create their own knowledge base for their teaching practice in a collaborative way.
• The final transition views change metaphorically as that occurring to a complex organism instead of a simple machine. This transition consists of a non-linear and organic view of change.

(Gordon, 1992, p.64-73)

Whether this "new paradigm" which Gordon proposes will eventually be the one that will define supervisory practices is not in question; the shift is already under way in the United States and change is inevitable. As Gordon points out, many of these views have been proposed in the past (p.74). Perhaps what gives these views more power now is their integration together into a single movement of educational change. There is a coherence here that has not been as evident in the past. But at what transition does this paradigm shift remain? We can look for evidence of such a shift in current models of
beginning teacher education and more specifically within the practicum setting. For example, the idea of promoting teacher empowerment has substantial value within the practicum setting, as evidenced by the growing partnerships between schools and universities to develop and use collaborative-based teacher education programs (Després, 1996; Tsui, 1995).

Waite (1994) claims that aspiring supervisors' definitions of supervision were evidence that a paradigm shift was occurring, moving from an emphasis on the technical to an emphasis on reflective and democratic practice. Respondents tended to explain "supervision" with a focus on the technical aspects of supervision, referring to such tasks as monitoring, providing tools and remediation. Yet the task of encouraging was mentioned the most, in subjects explanations of supervision, thus highlighting Waite's thesis that both theorists and practitioners are not rooted in either technical or reflective paradigms.

As Gordon looked at different theories of supervision as pointing to a new paradigm, yet another way to examine such perspectives is through the three major views often held in education and the social sciences: positivism, phenomenology and critical theory. May and Zimpher (1986) looked at the supervision of the "practicum" experience and examined it through these three worldviews (p.86-97).

Supervision which is positivistic is considered behavioristic, concerned with effectiveness, and assesses an accomplished goal (p.87). Both the supervisor and the beginning teacher apply a knowledge base established outside of the context in which they work and remain passive recipients of that knowledge. This approach has also been called the cognitive-developmental orientation (p.88). Some critics of this approach
doubt that this practice of student teaching is effective. They are concerned that student
teachers simply mimic the behaviour of their school advisors and do not learn as much of
the theoretical and general principles that would allow them to teach in a variety of
classroom situations. Although May and Zimpher (1986), believe that positivism in
supervision runs along an ends/means continuum, it cannot be assumed that this approach
is only found in traditional practicum settings and is as easy to observe as described
above. School advisors may consciously or unconsciously practice positivistic
supervision while believing otherwise.

Supervisory practice is considered phenomenological when the school advisor
helps the beginning teacher to make sense of their own practical experience. These two
work together as a team to achieve a better understanding of the classroom and to develop
their own teaching and supervisory styles (p.90). Beginning teachers are considered
active participants. The school advisor’s role is more collaborative and non-directive.
Zimpher and Howey (1987), refer to this orientation as displaying a clinical competence
or a personal competence for supervision.

According to May and Zimpher (1986), the critical theorist perspective
emphasizes personal and social enlightenment through critical inquiry (p.94). Examples
of this include the practice of reflective teaching and active participation of the student in
developing personal beliefs about themselves as teachers and the environment with which
they are participating (Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Zeichner and Tabachnick (1985); Zimpher
and Howey, 1987). The supervisor’s role is that of a facilitator. Within this critical
theorist perspective, the cooperating teacher assumes a critical role in reflecting on what
he or she intends to do in the classroom. This notion is based on a model where all
participants reflect on their own practices and question whose interests are being served by particular practices.

Some sponsor teachers who have tried the phenomenological and critical theory approaches through a collaborative teacher education model, have indicated that roles and responsibilities, for the most part, are left to the participants to develop (Després, 1996). This forces teachers into new and unfamiliar roles and relationships. Yielding authority to a collaborative environment may seem threatening to some. However, Després (1996), in his report of the Richmond Project: 1992-1996, stated that participants reported challenging and rewarding experiences from working in a collaborative model. Participants claim that as schools and the university began to work together, a comfortable relationships, founded upon common goals, began to be established. An example of a paradigm shift in an educational setting slowly emerging? I believe so.

In addition to worldviews and paradigm shifts, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) add motivational theory and its effect on the teacher’s workplace, to this multiple collection of supervisory theories. The authors state that when motivating conditions are found in the workplace, teachers find their work meaningful and purposeful. When supervision helps to empower learners, they are likely to experience personal responsibility for their work and be accountable for the outcomes (p.68).

This theory can be directly applied to the practicum setting and the student teacher can also find their experiences meaningful and purposeful. This sounds logical enough, however certain barriers exists. What is not considered is the role of the school advisor and how this affects the motivating conditions to be found in the workplace. For example, in a study conducted by MacDonald, Baker and Stewart (1995), school advisors
cited "giving up power", changing routines, differing expectations between the student teacher and the school advisor, and differing personalities as some of the drawbacks to having a student teacher (84-87). It seems that the school advisor who has difficulty "giving up power" and changing routines in the classroom, is less likely to be able to provide the motivational conditions, which Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) deem necessary to empower teachers, to their student teachers.

2.3 Collaborative Educational Settings

Collaborative group learning is not a new method in any sense. Its roots can be traced back to John Dewey, Jean Piaget, L.S. Vygotsky, and others. However, the idea of collaborative education as a model of teacher education is fairly new. This model originated as a response to the criticism of traditional teacher education that began in the mid-1980s (Grozier, Menter & Pollard, 1990; Zeichner, Mahlios & Gomez, 1988). Over the years it has been discussed and elaborated upon and as a result, many teacher education programs today claim to be using collaborative teacher educational models in some form.

Since supervision is an integral part of most teacher education programs, criticisms of individual-based field experiences highlight the unequal power relationship existing between the supervisor and teacher. In her article, Exploring Collaborative Supervision in Inservice Teacher Education, Tsui (1995) discusses how the tension and anxiety generated in the supervisory process undermines the potential of teacher supervision as a mutually beneficial and enriching experience. In an attempt to redress this imbalance, she explores a collaborative model that tries to minimize tension and maximize the potential benefits. When a collaborative supervision model was employed,
Tsui found that the advisor seemed to structure supervision within an inquiry-oriented approach. The advisor helped the teachers to articulate their practical theories, and thus helped student teachers to consider their own classroom practices. Tsui states that the student teachers helped the advisor to understand the complexities of their classroom processes.

The study detailed above offers support and praise for the collaborative model of teacher education. However, as with any model, this one has its limitations. Most of these limitations include some mention of time constraints or lack of substantive communication between members. Depending on the perceived cause of unsuccessful supervisory practices, efforts designed to overcome these barriers have included: selecting and matching team members in a systematic way, extended periods of practicum and development of relationships (Després, 1996). Also cited are training opportunities made available to school advisors, this would enable advisors to reconceptualize their roles and to analyze their own teaching and supervisory techniques (Garten, Hudson & Gossen, 1994).

2.4 Criticisms and Considerations to Collaborative Educational Models

Central to the premise of collaborative education is an understanding that practicum experiences are influenced by teaching and learning by socialization (McNally, Cope & Inglis, 1997; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981; Zeichner & Gore, 1990; Zimpher & Howey, 1987). This consideration has raised questions about how student teachers are most appropriately prepared for their work as teachers. The organization and beliefs of schools which have become embedded in practice, exert a powerful influence upon the
student teacher, sometimes referred to as the "wash out effect" since they may overpower
the practices learned in university (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985).

Given this effect, learning to teach is viewed largely in terms of induction into the
values and practices that predominate within the school. McNally, Cope and Inglis
(1997) describe interviews with student teachers detailing the important role of
relationships within the school culture. Student teachers stated that many of their
experiences were dependent on conditions that were mostly determined by others. These
conditions were viewed as potential problems and included issues of control in the
classroom between the school advisor and student teacher, termed the "handing over" of
the classroom. Another potential problem cited was the psychological stress of non-
inclusion in the team, illustrated by the formation of cliques in the staffroom. In this case,
student teachers were teamed with younger members of staff and temporary staff
members.

Zeichner, Mahlios and Gomez (1988) propose that the socialization process is in
fact more complex because schools generally contain multiple ideologies in the form of
groups of teachers who support particular subject ideologies or particular notions of
teaching and learning. The task of the new teacher becomes one of weaving their way
amongst these, often identifying with one group of teachers with whom they seek to
support. Zeichner and Gore (1990) suggest that the literature contains several models of
teacher socialization, which place differing emphases on the influence of the institutional
context and the individual teacher’s potential to change existing values and practices.

The socialization into the professional culture, which is what is required of
student teachers, is portrayed as a demanding task and should not be overlooked as an
influential factor in field-based practice in teacher education. This should be emphasized in collaborative models of teacher education where the ecology of the school plays an even greater role in a student teacher’s learning.

2.5 The Role of the School Advisor

The literature suggests that school advisors play a critical role in the professional growth and socialization of student teachers (Clarke, 1997; Eastman & Echols, 1998; Glickman & Bey, 1990). Two consistent findings in the research reveal that the role of the school advisor is poorly defined (Eastman & Echols, 1998; Glickman & Bey, 1990; Grimmett & Ratzlaff, 1986; Macdonald, Baker & Stewart, 1995) and that teachers are generally unprepared for the task of student teaching supervision (Clarke, 1997; Garten, Hudson & Harvey, 1994; Waite, 1994).

Grimmett & Ratzlaff (1986) compared findings from a U.S. study and a Canadian study on the expectations held by student teachers, school advisors, and university supervisors about the role of school advisors. In both studies, particular expectations were held for school advisors which placed them in an active role of practicing supervisor, much like that of a collaborative educational model. The findings indicated that student teacher’s expectations for school advisors include teaching the skills of presentation and classroom management, the development of professional responsibility, to provide information and resource materials and team teaching and planning in the classroom.

The supervisory training of the school advisor has been shown to affect the quality of practicum experiences (Clarke, 1997; Rust, 1988; Thies-Sprinthall, 1986). Such a finding recognizes that cooperating teachers require preparation for such an important and
complex role in order that they do not pass inaccurate information to beginning teachers (Thies-Sprinthall, 1986).

Likewise, Clarke (1997) believes that these influences should not be taken lightly. He states, that one should not assume “that good teachers will automatically make good school advisors” (p.1). With this in mind, Clarke highlights areas of professional development for school advisors that have begun at many universities. Professional development opportunities emphasize training in areas of student teacher observation, substantive communication with student teachers, and the evaluation of student teachers in practice (p.2). In his study, Clarke used practicum accounts from past course work (a supervisory course for school advisors) to chart the progress of a required coaching practicum. Forty-five reports were used and categorized according to supervisors’ examination and their relationship between themselves and the student teacher.

The emerging themes were:

- the possibility of multiple interpretations for the same event,
- the tenuous nature of the relationship between the teacher and student,
- the realization that observation is a skillful practice,
- the need for flexibility in coaching styles,
- the need for carefully pre-planned conferences with the student teacher, and
- the unanticipated professional development opportunities for teachers

(Clarke, 1997, p.8-12)

Clarke reports that the teacher advisors were “shocked” by the various themes which emerged as a result of their work with student teachers. Indeed, these findings and the findings of others indicate that when school advisors investigate their own practices in a reflective way, they are better able to shift focus from activities of the student teachers solely, to their own activities as supervisors (Clarke, 1997; Glickman & Bey, 1990; Rust, 1988).
Realizing the importance of the school advisor’s role, Eastman and Echols (1998) analyzed responses from a recent British Columbia College of Teachers Survey of recent graduates of provincial teacher education programs. From the data, they found that past students raised four common themes and concerns about practicum settings. They are:

- the selection of school advisors
- how school advisors prepare for their role,
- professional/ethical relationships between school advisors and student teachers,
- role definition.

The common themes identified by Eastman and Echols will serve as a frame for the guiding questions for the subjects in this study. As those involved in teacher education programs begin to inquire into the school advisor’s motivations, conceptions of role, preparation for the role and selection it is hoped that questions such as those asked by the past graduates will begin to be answered through discussion of and modifications to current practices. This gives merit to teacher education programs such as collaborative education ventures and further adds to professionalize the role of the school advisor. And most importantly, provides opportunities for a rich and rewarding experience for one of the stakeholders in teacher education—the student teacher.

2.6 Summary

The review of literature reveals a great deal about what conditions are best suited for the most successful triad experiences in a collaborative model. In general, the literature reveals that there are sometimes fundamental differences between the needs of teachers and the needs of supervisors. It has been suggested that school advisors participate in some form of professional development (Clarke, 1997; Glickman & Bey, 1990; Rust, 1988; Thies-Sprinthall, 1986).
Research indicates that supervision is most successful when the culture of teaching is changed from a hierarchical atmosphere to a collaborative culture that involves all participants. Different perceptions of the function of “supervisor” (Waite, 1994) and the power of this unequal relationship has been a source of much tension and anxiety (Tsui, 1985). This can undermine the potential of the supervisor relationship. A collaborative model of supervision can overcome such tensions and maximize successes for both parties.

The socialization into the professional culture, which is what is required of student teachers, is portrayed as a demanding task and should not be overlooked as an influential factor in field-based practice in teacher education (McNally, Cope & Inglis, 1997; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Thus the nature of relationships between student teachers and school advisors is made clearer by identifying benefits, drawbacks, stressful factors, and ways to cope with stress (Macdonald, Baker & Stewart, 1995). Answering the research questions and making this knowledge part of the literature plays a part in legitimizing new role relationships.

The purpose of this review was to assess the legitimacy of conducting an investigation into the way cooperating teachers perceive their roles and responsibilities, within a collaborative teacher education setting. I believe the study has merit and past research indicates that there is a need to inquire further in this area (Després, 1996; Eastman & Echols, 1998; Glickman & Bey, 1990; Grimmett & Ratzlaff, 1986; Rust, 1988).
Chapter 3
Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to gain insight into classroom teachers' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the school advisor within the Richmond Project—a collaborative practicum setting. This chapter is comprised of two components: the context of the study and the description of the study. The context describes where the program took place and the characteristics of the program. The description of the study will address the selection of participants for the study, the researcher, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

3.1 The Context of the Study

This section describes the school under study, within the Richmond School District and the collaborative teacher education model used in Richmond.

3.11 The School

Thomas Elementary* is located within the Richmond School District in British Columbia (*the name of the school has been changed to maintain confidentiality). Richmond is one of the largest school districts in British Columbia, serving over 23,000 students from K-12, and employs approximately 2,350 teachers. Thomas Elementary has been involved in the Richmond Project partnered with the University of British Columbia for six years. During the year of this study, Thomas Elementary was involved in a modified version of the Richmond Project which implements Problem-Based learning into the practicum.
Thomas Elementary seemed like an ideal choice for study due to its partnership with the university for seven years, it was assumed that staff with their extensive experience in the project would be quite articulate about their roles within the project. Thomas Elementary has approximately 550 students, a staff of 24 teachers and 4 classroom assistants. The researcher was well acquainted with the daily routines and spirit of the school—which was described as “laissez-faire” by two of the subjects. The researcher had established previous professional relationships with its staff.

3.12 Collaborative Educational Settings--The Richmond Practicum Project

The Richmond Project matches the criteria for a collaborative model of teacher education. Després’ (1996) preliminary report detailing the history of the Richmond Project between 1992-1996 outlines this collaborative setting. As this was the setting where the research for this study was conducted, his report is integral to the understanding of the beginnings of this school-based teacher education model and its development over the years.

The Richmond Project has been in existence since 1992, it works as a collaborative educational model involving a three way partnership between the University of British Columbia Teacher Education Office, the Richmond School District and the Richmond Teacher’s Association. A goal of the program was to place the decision-making about the student teachers learning experiences and evaluation in the hands of the teachers. Therefore reducing the responsibilities of the faculty advisor as the central decision-maker (Després, 1996, p.6).
Key characteristics of the Richmond Project are as follows:

- nucleus of approximately six school advisors form a team in each school,
- various schools apply and are selected to participate in the project,
- school advisors are the principal evaluators,
- school project coordinator is appointed by the school advisor group and has certain, organizational responsibilities, and
- student teachers undertake all of their practica in one school

(Després, 1996, p.7-9)

Després (1996) reports that, initially, there was a great deal of uncertainty about the collaborative-based education model among the participants. Roles and responsibilities were for the most part left to the participants to develop. The changes in the program structure forced staff into new and unfamiliar roles and relationships with one another and university personnel. Participating in a collaborative environment seemed threatening to some. However, as school and university participants began to work together, comfortable relationships began to be established. As a result, many of the participants have stated that being involved with this collaborative model has been a rewarding experience both for the student teachers and the school advisors (Després, 1996, 17-21).

Another unique quality to this collaborative effort is the team dynamics which exist between the school advisors. Beyond the partnership, school advisors also function as a group, which included participating in on-site classes as part of the teacher preparation program with the student teachers.
3.2 Description of the Study

This section describes the participants and the methodology.

3.21 The Participants

The participants for this study were recruited from one project site school. To become a subject in the study, a school advisor must have participated in the Richmond Practicum Project through one complete practicum. A memorandum detailing the information pertaining to the study and a request for volunteers was sent to the principal of the school and read at a staff meeting. One staff member who wanted to participate in the study contacted the researcher and also provided a list of other interested subjects from the staff. Six school advisors were interviewed. A school visit followed and an interview schedule was constructed. Each teacher was given a copy of the consent form detailing the study (Appendix A). Subjects were also given the option to preview a copy of the guiding interview questions (Appendix B). One out of six participants did so.

The participants (whose names have been changed) represented the different roles in a cohort grouping. Their profiles at the time of the interview were as follows:

- Lauren had been a school advisor five times, three of those being in the Richmond Practicum Project. She has taken the supervisory training course offered by the University. She has over ten years teaching experience.

- Liz had been a school advisor twice, one of those being in the Richmond Practicum Project. She has taken the supervisory training course offered by the University. She has had over ten years teaching experience.

- Sean had been a school advisor four times, all four of those being in the Richmond Practicum Project. He has taken the supervisory training course offered by the University. He has had over ten years teaching experience.

- Carol has been a school advisor ten times, three of those being in the Richmond Practicum Project. She has not taken the supervisory training course offered by the University. She has over ten years teaching experience.
• Gail has been a school advisor once, and has never had a student teacher in the Richmond Practicum Project. She has not taken the supervisory training course offered by the University. She is the Resource Teacher at the school and has over ten years teaching experience. She has been a faculty advisor once at the participating University and has been a school coordinator in the Richmond Practicum Project.

• Sheila has been a school advisor four times, two of those being in the Richmond Practicum Project. She has taken the supervisory training course offered by the University. She has had over ten years teaching experience.

3.22 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. A list of guiding questions was used by the interviewer and was made available to subjects (Appendix B). Given the purpose of the study, which was to investigate how school advisors view their roles and responsibilities within a cohort grouping, this methodology was deemed the best way to obtain in-depth information. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) claim that semi-structured interviews are more flexible than the structured interview because they allow the interviewer to probe and expand the respondent’s responses (p.157).

One interview was conducted with each of the participants over a three-week period. All interviews took between forty-five minutes to one hour in duration before, during or after the school day in a quiet place within the school. The subjects were given an opportunity to review their interview transcripts. After the analysis was completed each subject was given the opportunity to conduct a member check. At the beginning of each interview, consent forms were signed and given to the interviewer, subjects were reminded that their names or any names they used throughout the interview would be changed. Also the school’s name would be changed.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in full by the interviewer (Appendix C). Using the “constant comparative method”, as described by Glaser and
Strauss (1967) and LeCompte and Priessle (1993), categories were identified by coding responses in the transcripts. Then, responses were categorized. Themes and patterns were ascertained from the analysis of the categorized responses.

3.3 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the experiences of the triad members within the Richmond Project. Therefore, I cannot generalize to other collaborative program participants or contexts. The data was collected from initial questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, which were further limited by the participants ability to recall and describe events taking place since the program's inception to present, and their willingness to discuss their perceptions. The school was currently involved in a modification of the Richmond Practicum Project, which incorporated a problem-based model to its practicum component. The Problem-Based Learning Model offers a series of case studies that are examined in small groups and then discussed in larger groups. These case studies replace regular course work enabling the student teachers to be working in a problem solving mode, by examining and extracting the specific details of their case, they are able to construct knowledge based on their own personal research, group collaboration, and advice from their tutors. The student teachers are in regular contact with their practicum schools right from the beginning of the school year.

It was anticipated that teachers would be able to articulate their perceptions of the former Richmond Practicum Project more clearly if they had both the regular program experience and an alternate project experience for comparison. Therefore, although this change might initially be viewed as a limitation, I believe the contrast between the two enhanced this study.
In looking at the limitations of the study I am required to look at my own bias, my past role relationships and my attempts to recreate new ones. However, this was a genuine attempt to examine a problem. Careful attention was given to not compromise the subject’s knowledge with my own interpretations and research agenda. In particular, the interviews and analysis protocols were used to ensure that the views of the advisor, although not entirely free from the experience I brought to the study, portrayed as accurately as possible the views of the advisors.

In light of the above, however, this study provided insight into the nature of a collaborative field-based experience through the eyes of its participants. Through these participants, it was hoped that insights into the relevance of role, relationships and the effects on the overall quality of cohort groupings in teacher education would be formed.
Chapter 4
Results

4.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the data collected from the interviews of six school advisors from the Richmond Practicum Project. Some of the subjects had multiple roles within the Project. The group represents teachers from both primary and intermediate divisions. The teaching experiences of the school advisors within the Project ranged from one to five years.

The following is my understanding of how these school advisors perceive their roles and responsibilities within a cohort grouping such as the Richmond Project. The categories of description emerging from the interview data are:

- The perceived roles of the school advisor,
- The motivations for involvement as a school advisor within a cohort grouping such as the Richmond Project,
- Preparation and training of school advisors,
- Positive aspects of the Richmond Project,
- Disadvantages and suggested improvements to the Richmond Project, and
- Professional and ethical considerations as a school advisor in the Richmond Project

4.1 Roles

As suggested, school advisors play a critical role in the development and growth of student teachers (Clarke, 1997; Eastman & Echols, 1998; Glickman & Bey, 1990). Eastman and Echols (1998) remark on how little is known about school advisor's motivations, conceptions of role and preparation. This section examines these criteria as a definition for the role of the school advisor.
4.11 School Advisor’s Perceived Roles

Experience: Role development over time

All of the participants discussed the evolution of their role as school advisors. They indicated that they became more comfortable as school advisors within a cohort grouping with time. Lauren exemplified this by stating, that not only did they have to grow into their roles as school advisors, but they had to also rebuild relationships with their colleagues as fellow school advisors in a group. Roles were developed through conversations with others, validation of ideas and discussion of concerns *(A:96). This supports findings by Rust, 1988; Tsui, 1995 and Wood, 1991. Carol stated that in the beginning she felt lost and needed guidance; she credits the faculty advisor at the time with providing the support to help her through her first experiences. “I did have that feeling, starting out, that I didn’t know what I was doing I really needed to be told every step of the way. But once I was told that I could do it--no problem (E:98).”

It is here where subjects also indicated areas where their own personal growth had occurred. Their statements are valued in this paper because although the school advisors do function as a cohort group they also have individual styles and philosophies about teaching student teachers and provide these experiences in their classrooms. In turn they bring these styles and opinions to their cohort grouping.

Philosophies and Beliefs: Reciprocal learning and encouraging independence

When subjects were asked about their philosophies and beliefs about working with student teachers, all of the subjects cited either reciprocal learning or encouraging

*refers to quotes used from interview transcripts (interview type, line from transcript)
independence in student teachers as a principal belief which replicates the findings of May & Zimpher (1986), Tsui (1995) and Wood (1991). Liz saw her relationship with the student teacher as co-teaching one another. She acknowledged in the beginning the need to “play a mentor role and build the relationship with the student teacher but then it should evolve into a co-teaching kind of affair (B:94).” Sheila echoed similar beliefs. She considered herself to be a team member in the student teacher / school advisor relationship. She stated that her goal was to provide an environment where the student teacher could “jump in and experiment and ultimately find their own teaching style (F:70).”

In fact, all subjects mentioned the importance of providing opportunities in the classroom for student teachers to become more independent. Sean stated that he felt strongly about creating a real space for student teachers to operate. A requirement for his student teachers was to take on as many aspects of the teaching role as possible, which included writing newsletters and making telephone calls. He stated that “it is overwhelming at times because it is a first time for a lot of these things. But ultimately, it puts them in good standing when it comes to practice down the road. (C:196).”

Liz and Gail both mention the importance of anxiety and tensions in a co-teaching relationship and mention the need to have these in their work with both student teachers and other collaborative partners. These tensions are said to create a “newness” and thus a renewal of one’s own practice (Gordon, 1992, Macdonald, Baker & Stewart, 1995; Tsui, 1995). This is stated best by Gail: “My approach is more the way I work with teachers, we are talking, writing journals, attaining a level of trust with each other. It’s those
tensions, I think that move your thinking forward—not the part that goes smoothly—almost the opposite (E:118).”

Evaluation: The changing roles of school and faculty advisor

One of the unique features of this cohort grouping was that the school advisor was given the responsibility of being the principal evaluator. This meant writing all anecdotal evaluations and formal reports for the student teacher (Macdonald, Baker & Stewart, 1995). As such, the faculty advisor is said to have more of a liaison to school advisors, administrators and student teachers (Déspres, 1996). The faculty advisor provides a collaborative approach with colleagues, in the school and advises school advisors on matters of professional development and evaluation (Déspres, 1996).

Interestingly, all participants at some point in the interview, indicated that they felt uncomfortable in their role as primary evaluator and in this area, all relied on the faculty advisor for guidance or preferred to share their duties with the faculty advisor. This led to a discussion of the role of the faculty advisor within the Richmond Project with the six participants.

Lauren felt strongly that the faculty advisor was there to support the school advisor. She indicated that she found her role as primary evaluator difficult and relied on the faculty advisor to help write and edit all formal evaluations on her student teacher. When she was reminded that she was the primary evaluator, the school advisor preferred to refer to the role as a joint venture.

Although Liz claimed to feel secure in her role as a school advisor, she did admit some difficulty with evaluative measures. She referred to her own philosophy as a source when evaluating a student teacher. The subject felt that evaluation begins “with being
able to see that I have got somebody here who really has a heart for this job, that is interested in kids—it’s got to be an internal thing. If I don’t see that, then we work towards that (B:350).” When asked about her role as a primary evaluator, she questioned the intent by stating, “as the principal evaluator I would be curious to know who the audience is for this evaluation? Is it something that is simply a fail or pass, or something the students will use again in their resume (B:307).” She preferred to think of evaluation in the Richmond Project as a three-way venture. She claimed that this aspect of the role was not made clear to her. She assumed that the evaluation always involved the student teacher and faculty advisor having direct input. However, she did give credit to the coursework and knowledge of evaluative theory she attained in her preparation as a school advisor.

All of the subjects indicated that they sought support from the faculty advisor when there was a potential problem or things were not going as smoothly as they would have liked. They realized the limitations in their role and sought support in some area such as communication, goals, evaluation, or behaviour. In which case, the faculty advisor’s role went from a liaison role to a mediator role. Carol referred to this situation and the role of the faculty advisor as “needing a heavy sometimes (D:110).”

*The Central Role of Relationships*

Recognizing the uniqueness in each of their roles all, of the subjects made some form of personal statement for which their role had become theirs. Lauren stated that her philosophy and beliefs about working with student teachers included considerable communication and learning to use criticism instead of being critical (A:67). Liz was
critical about her own practice, "I am probably too mouthy and too bossy and in recognizing it, I try to restrain myself (B:105)."

Sean noted the experiences which both the mentor and the mentee bring to the practicum. He saw himself as an experienced mentor who was sharing experiences with a student teacher who had a great deal of background and life experiences. He said that his job was to provide but not to have them adopt his style, to coax them into bringing out their own approaches and to provide opportunities for a collegial relationship. In stating this, he rejected any hierarchical relationship, which may have existed between the two of them.

For Sean, it was important to seek out a collegial relationship with his student teacher. He has stated that he enjoys being given the opportunity to talk about his practice with the student teacher. He notes "teaching can be lonely sometimes, even though you are constantly surrounded by these kids you kind of operate within this world of not being able to debrief a the end of the day, in this case you get to do that. And I value that (C:58)."

The concept of forming relationships with the student teacher is at times complex. Like the others interviewed, Carol also sought a colleague to colleague role however, was quick to point out that this is only one level of her role. The other level is the mentor to mentee role. She tries to form both of these relationships, but notes that there may be difficulty if a problem arises. At this point, she stated that the university should get involved and it must be realized that the school advisor has to step back into her role as mentor. "The student teacher needs to know that the school advisor has to observe and be honest (D: 110)."
Lauren discovered, through experience, that school advisors must have a certain mindset when having a student teacher. She was not supposed to have a student teacher at the time of the interview. She opted out of the Richmond Project that year but due to the illness of another school advisor, was asked to take on that student teacher. It was here that she discovered the importance of previously established relationships because she found it very difficult to relate with the student teacher that year.

Gail had a dual role in the Richmond Project, a school coordinator at the time of the interview and the school’s resource teacher. In her professional role as a learning resource teacher, she noted that often when the student teacher took over the majority of the teaching responsibilities in the classroom, she found herself working with that student teacher. It was essential to form a working relationship with the student teacher so that they would be aware of the broad array of individual needs and individual educational plans for students in the classroom. She also stressed the importance of feeling a part of a teaching team, which is very much a true picture of classroom life today. Sean stated: “you wanted to inculcate people into the actual working philosophy to this school which is that we are a group, we are a team, we support each other (C:312).”

In her interview, Sheila downplayed her role. She preferred to describe it as a simple exchange of uncomplicated relationships. She saw her role as constantly evolving, letting the student be an observer in the classroom and then providing a “vehicle to practice” and then to provide feedback (F:224).”
4.12 Motivation

In 1992, all subjects were approached by the principal and asked to participate in the first year of the Richmond Practicum Project. When asked, Lauren indicated that university credits were a major motivation to participate whereas Carol felt that it was her responsibility as an educator to allow other people the use of her classroom. She made it clear that her motivations were “not certificate-driven”.

Almost all of the subjects referred to professional development as a primary motivator for participation (Macdonald, Baker & Stewart, 1995; Tsui, 1995). Liz stated that it encouraged a renewal of ideas and a renewal for one’s own practice. A motivator for some subjects was their confidence and experience as teachers. Sean reported that “I was at a point in my career that I felt that I was not a neophyte anymore and I had something to offer (C:83).”

The data also revealed some important considerations with regards to the motivation of school advisors. Two of the subjects indicated that involvement in the Richmond Project should not be taken lightly. Sean made the comment that before participating, one must “be willing to partake in a very intense relationship for a short period of time.”

4.13 Preparation

Four of the six participants had formal supervisory training in the form of a three credit supervision course offered through the University of British Columbia—their collaborative partner within the Richmond Project. Of the four subjects that had the training, all mentioned that they considered it to be very valuable and had enhanced their role as school advisor in some way. Lauren felt that further training such as the
supervision course helps to professionalize the role of school advisors. She remarked that often teachers who are considering becoming a school advisor do not realize the amount of work and training needed in order to successfully take on a student teacher. These remarks are consistent with the findings of Clarke (1997), Garten, Hudson & Gossen (1994) and Theis-Sprinthall, (1986).

Liz and Sheila felt that the supervisory training was an important component of their professional growth and contributed to their role as school advisors. With the training, they claim to have had the confidence to pursue their roles. Sean learned to be more "clinical and methodological instead of only anecdotal and to gain a heightened awareness" of his role (C:136). He also learned to make feedback more productive and effective.

Two of the subjects—Carol and Gail did not have any formal supervisory training before participating in the Richmond Project. When the subjects were asked to comment on this, they felt that their teaching experience over the years was invaluable and helped to form their roles as school advisors.

When subjects were asked if some form of supervisory training be considered a prerequisite for school advisors wishing to participate in the Richmond Project, the four subjects who had received training had indicated that it should. Whereas, the two subjects who did not receive the coursework did not. It was proposed by Sean and Sheila that some form of training should be compulsory, if not through a course then at least through a series of seminars. Sean felt that it would be beneficial if the seminars were offered throughout the practicum so the training would be applicable and valuable to the
school advisor as they have their student teacher. Sean felt that the supervisory course was the best option but felt that not everyone would commit to taking it.

Carol felt strongly that she had adequate training with the course orientation that accompanied the beginning of the program. “I know there is a course and that it is probably very helpful but if someone said to me, ‘to be able to take a student teacher, you must take this course’ I would not take the student teacher (D:53).” Carol added that she had heard that the course was excellent and her colleagues had taken it, however she felt that it should be in the form of a workshop only and not a course. She felt that a course “dictates how school advisors teach” instead of guiding supervision (D:78).

Interestingly, two of the subjects commented on the importance of the faculty advisor for their supervisory training. During the beginning year of the program the faculty advisor at the time had invested a lot of hands-on troubleshooting and training for the beginning school advisors. Though the school was in its sixth year of the program at the time of the interview, two of the subjects felt that it was important to mention the important role she had in shaping their understanding of supervision.

Some comments were made regarding the qualifications of school advisors participating in the Richmond Project. Liz had concerns about the qualifications of school advisors. She felt that it was a responsibility that should not be taken lightly.

When you think about the amount of work that the students coming into the program have done—they have already done four years at university, now they are cramming a two-year course into one year, they are working overtime, they are spending a lot of money on this course and if the match doesn’t work or if the sponsor teacher is not trained well enough I think we are jeopardizing people’s careers because some things haven’t worked out. Its weird because if I have no qualifications to be a sponsor teacher how do they know down at the university that this person is any good or not (B: 57).
Liz stated that university training is essential to the professionalization of the role. Carol had an opposing view. She felt that there is a need for valuable feedback from student teachers. She stated that student teachers have never indicated that they would like better trained school advisors and until there is such feedback, she felt that her training was sufficient.

4.2 Cohort Groupings Within a Collaborative Educational Setting
“The Richmond Project”

Collaborative educational settings have been described as mutually beneficial to the student teachers and to the school advisors and provide an enriching experience for all those involved (Tsui, 1995). A collaborative model of teacher education promotes supervision as inquiry-oriented. Evidence of inquiry-oriented supervision can be observed within the cohort groupings of the Richmond Practicum Project.

As mentioned previously, the socialization into a school culture is a complex task and is indeed a factor to consider during the practical experience in teacher education (McNally, Cope & Inglis, 1997; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Subjects were asked to comment on the nature of cohort groupings based on their own experiences within the Richmond Project and the socialization occurring within these groups.

4.2.1 Cohort Groupings and Advantages

All subjects seemed enthusiastic about their experiences in the Richmond Project and were reflective about why the cohort groupings worked well for their school over the last six years. When subjects were asked what the key characteristics of the Richmond Project were, subjects reported that funding, a clear and concise timeline, and celebrations
marking progression along the way were essential program components that kept the program running smoothly. Interesting to note, subjects attributed their successes within the Richmond Project and their cohesiveness as a group to the amount of time they had been involved in this setting. Subjects felt that the beginning years in the Project were very different compared to the Project which they participated in at the time. It was felt that the Richmond Project has unfolded over the years due to more defined roles from schools and the university. Sean exemplifies this point: “after applying for the sixth time to run the project, it has become a commitment that we grow teachers here. They (school advisors) do it for themselves as much as for the student teachers (C:399).”

Funding given to participating schools from the university provided support and time to be given to the student teachers and the school advisors. Many of the subjects believed that because such support was provided, it reaffirmed the university’s commitment to the triad. They recognize that it “takes money to build a teacher (C:361).” Lauren stated that because the university supports them, school advisors are more likely to use their own time willingly (A:248).

Sheila noted that funding also carried a psychological function for student teachers. She felt that the funding which came with student teachers was essential to their sense of belonging. Students did not feel that they were a burden and were free to use the school and its resources without taking advantage.

Many of the subjects indicated the importance of celebration within the cohort groups and the school. Some social gathering or recognition was given at integral points during the practicum and shared with the whole staff. Sheila states: “we had lots of
celebrations to mark the beginning and the middle, the school advisors were very good about making sure that we broke bread when we had a milestone (F:24).”

When subjects were asked to comment on the advantages of the program, some key characteristics emerged. Many subjects appreciated the structure of the program and liked how its setup facilitated change gradually over time for both the student and the school advisor. Liz liked the way the program allowed student teachers to take “small steps” in the beginning and accept more responsibility as they became acquainted with the students and their histories. Another advantage cited, was the opportunity for pairings between student teacher and school advisor. Because of the numbers in the group, the faculty advisor could take the opportunity to match personalities and specific backgrounds among pairings.

Subjects recognized that groups seemed to empower each other to carry out their roles in a confident manner. Student teachers were not viewed as a single entity but instead referred to as a group of six students who came into the school. Subjects noted that the student teachers seemed to support each other, have camaraderie and trust and tended to instill confidence in each other. The subjects reported that the student teachers seemed to function within their own social group. Carol stated “student teachers have colleagues here. It is a place where students can practice being collaborative instead of competitive through a university setting (D:140).” When asked how the practical experience is shaped differently in their school, Liz stated that not only is it different in the school, but it is very different in each classroom (Gordon, 1992). Therefore the student teachers experiences were ultimately very different. It is here where she felt that the student teachers cohort group was effective because the student teachers were able to
witness different teaching practices in the classroom and were involved in a realistic picture of teaching life. "When the student teachers are all sitting around having a beer at the end of the day or at the end of the week and they are talking about what they did, then maybe they are pulling in all different ideas and using them together (B:232)."

Likewise, subjects were also empowered from each other in their own cohort groupings. School advisors in the project met once a week as a group with the faculty advisor to serve as a forum for any discussion with regards to supervision and evaluation of the student teachers (Gordon, 1992). In the interview, subjects were asked to elaborate on how they would characterize the dynamics of the school advisors as a team. They were also asked to describe what a typical school advisor's group meeting looked like.

Although all subjects were grateful to have such a forum, what each subject valued in the grouping was different. However, all did agree that when something went wrong, they depended on the school advisor group meetings for support. Like relationships which are built with the student teachers, subjects indicated that they had to re-build relationships with their colleagues as fellow school advisors in a group. Sean indicated that group meetings enabled school advisors to talk about their practice, which he felt is something that is rare.

When staff sit in the staffroom we don't sit around and talk about craft or practice. And this is what we had to do, it was very valuable, I got to see a lot of whom I consider my friends, my colleagues in different lights, and these are really skilled people (C:217).

Subjects indicated that the weekly group meetings encouraged continuity and teamwork. Lauren felt that in group meetings, when one's concerns are the same as others, solutions or ideas become validated. Whereas Liz thought of group meetings as
an informational exchange and not a forum to discuss individual problems. She felt that with experience as a school advisor, what she has come to need from the group has changed. This reaffirms the importance of providing support to new school advisors as they determine their role within the school setting. Carol appreciated the opportunity to have some private time with the faculty advisor, if needed for more personal issues. Carol noted that the group meetings held between school advisors impacted the advisor’s role. “It forced you out of your little situation and forced you to see beyond, where you were always situated and to look into different environments (C:441).” Group discussions within the meetings included how to write reports for the student teacher, planning celebrations, scheduling workshops, and discussion of program components.

4.22 Suggested Improvements to Cohort Groupings

During the interviews, subjects were asked to describe any drawbacks they may have experienced while participating in the Richmond Project and in turn, offer any improvements to the program. The resulting themes occurred: relationships, professional issues and suggestions given to improve the program.

Subjects felt that the building of relationships between the triad members—school advisor, student teacher and faculty advisor—was essential to the success of the program for each year. They credited the time given at the beginning of the project, which allowed for the building of such relationships. Lauren mentioned that in addition to building relationships, the first step lies with the school advisor’s willingness to build such relationships (Macdonald, Baker & Stewart, 1995; McNally, Cope & Inglis, 1997). She stated that if a school advisor is not ready to accept the full responsibility of their duties, he/she are not going to be able to establish essential relationships (A:127).
The relationship between the school advisor and the faculty advisor is one that should not be taken for granted. Unlike the student teachers who leave every year, subjects indicated a need to have a faculty advisor situated at the school for more than one year. School advisors build relationships of trust and consult with the faculty advisors on issues of supervision and their own professional development. Since the school advisors at the school look upon their experiences with the Richmond Practicum Project as a growing experience over six years, they indicated that when the faculty advisor changes every year there was a lack of continuity for the school. Gail stated: "So any good resolves we had about evolving the project were interrupted (E:282)."

There were certain professional practice issues which arose during the interviews in which some subjects found it difficult to fulfill their role as school advisors. Although these difficulties were different for all subjects, they were cognizant of the fact that these issues could not be resolved within their role as school advisors. Liz recounted a problem she had with the English skills of a student teacher. She found support and resolution from the faculty advisor, after first discussing this issue with the student teacher. She felt this was beyond her role as a school advisor. This was an issue about the university’s standards in the project and felt that this student teacher’s lack of English skills would not meet the district’s standards. She stated that she was able to separate this person’s practice from the problem and turned the problem over to the faculty advisor.

From these professional practice issues, subjects were able to provide useful program recommendations based on the last six years of their involvement in the Richmond Practicum Project. All subjects seemed to be in favour of having some form of coursework at the school site. Since this was currently happening at the school during the
time of this interview, subjects were able to comment on the differences. Subjects felt that having students at the school site for some of their coursework bridged the gap between school and university. Subjects felt that on-site training and coursework enabled students to build longer and more meaningful professional relationships with all members of the staff.

There seemed to be special emphasis placed on the relationship-building process in the Richmond Practicum Project. Liz stated that she would prefer to have more information about what students are doing when they are away from the school. She felt that the student’s experiences at university and the school site should not be separate entities but instead should work together to complement and reinforce what each is doing.

What I see are two separate entities—the university and the school and the little ball of students who are being bounced back and forth and they don’t know if they are going to hit the hard wall or the soft wall (B:396-399).

School advisors also made suggestions about the program requirements of the Richmond Practicum Project based on their observations of past students teachers participating at their school. Gail, who is a resource teacher and was the project coordinator at the time of the interview, felt strongly that the ESL (English as a Second Language) and Resource programs should be considered as part of the student teacher’s experiences within the Richmond Practicum Project. She felt that opportunities need to be here to create a team bond between the student teacher and the ESL/Resource teachers just as this bond is essential with the classroom teacher. She felt that student teachers need to become familiarized with IEP’s (Individual Educational Plans) to better understand and teach the students they are working with. Because time was not permitted for this in the program, Gail often had to try and discuss IEP’s and individual students
requiring resource support, with student teachers whenever time permitted. She felt that funding and support should be made available to include resource teachers who wish to participate.

Lauren felt that students would benefit by receiving training in counselling students with their problems. She felt this was an area which was lacking and weak with her students. Student teachers did not seem able to deal with children with problems or even recognize them when they were teaching. She cited a recent case where a student yelled at her student teacher. The student teacher became very upset and took this issue personally. The school advisor questioned the upset student to pinpoint the source of his anger. She found out that:

his family had been evicted from their apartment and he was very upset about how this would affect his birthday so he reacted in a way which he wouldn't normally. But she (student teacher) didn’t get to the bottom of it because she didn’t know how. And I think it could really make a difference if they have training (A: 274-285).

Subjects also commented on improvements to the Project which would specifically help the student teacher to have an enriching practical experience. Sheila felt that there was support given to school advisors guiding them through the program but not enough support was made available to the student teacher in the event that something went wrong. She felt that student teachers were left to their own devices to monitor their own progress within their group (F:88). Further, Sheila felt that given the nature of the Practicum Project students should be given the opportunity to practice in all grade levels. This would provide a more realistic picture of their future job situation and better prepare them as teachers. She felt that it was likely that their first jobs would be as substitute
teachers and that the university should better prepare them for this. She felt that this could easily be facilitated through the different participating classrooms within the sponsor school.

When considering their own experiences, certain subjects took the opportunity to discuss difficulties which may have hindered their performance as school advisors. As observed previously, a significant difficulty was associated with the school advisor's performance as a primary evaluator. Sean acknowledged that school advisors do need help, professionally, in adapting to their evaluative role. Gail expands on this further by recounting what she had observed as a participant in the Richmond Practicum Project.

Once or twice a school advisor has felt too alone with the process of supporting a student who in some way or another is weak or failing or not taking hold in a certain way. And one of the down sides I have seen is that a teacher will hold that problem to themselves for too long and things will have deteriorated badly in some way or another. In this sense, there is a certain conflict with the professionalism (E:184-196).

4.23 Professional / Ethical Considerations

As mentioned earlier by the school advisors, there were issues of professionalism and ethical considerations around the relationships between the triad members and through the role identification of the school advisor. The nature of the Richmond Practicum Project relied on the success of the cohort groupings. These groups, specifically the school advisors, drew support from each other and carried out their roles both independently in their classrooms and as a participating triad member in the Project. This posed a dilemma and a continual awareness of the need to maintain professional standards.
Gail felt that a certain conflict existed with maintaining professionalism among school advisors. She stated that school advisors should not discuss problems they are having with their student teachers amongst each other, yet if one does not, it is difficult to maintain support from the cohort grouping. In this sense, the subject indicated that it was difficult to maintain professional standards.

Subjects mentioned that there was a potential for problems if a relationship did not work out between school advisor and student teacher. Carol stated that there was the potential for unethical or unbecoming comments to other members of the school advisor grouping. “If somebody is not clicking with their student teacher, or their student teacher is not ready to do a good job, then I think that if they are the gossipy type, that could be very hurtful (D:171).” Although through further discussion all members mentioned that their group meetings were not a place to discuss individual problems with their student teachers.

Likewise Gail felt that there may be difficulty around the process when it is not working well for the student. She feels that school advisors need to address problems in a professional way, be more professional in their role when things are not going well. Clearly issues of professionalism are on the minds of these subjects. They continually considered and discussed them. They were aware of the implications and through their awareness tried to avoid the pitfalls.
4.3 Summary

The interview data indicated the broad array of roles which school advisors perceive as essential to their success. All of the school advisors agreed that their roles had developed through time. They credited this time to rebuilding relationships with staff and gaining experience. All subjects indicated a struggle with their responsibility as the primary evaluator. In fact, many of the subjects preferred to share this role with the faculty advisor.

School advisors referred to their professional development as the primary motivator for participation in the Richmond Practicum Project. Subjects felt that there were important factors to consider before taking on the role as school advisor. These included a willingness to build a relationship with the student teacher, some preparatory supervision training—although some subjects disagree on the form that this training should take, and a school advisor who has the qualifications to take on the roles and responsibilities of a school advisor.

A significant advantage to the cohort groupings, cited by subjects, was the cohesiveness resulting from each group—school advisors and student teachers. Subjects stated that the key characteristics governing the success of the program was the clear and concise timeline, the funding which accompanied each student teacher and the celebrations which marked their progression along the way.
Subjects felt that the weekly school advisor’s meetings encouraged continuity and teamwork and all subjects agreed that when a potential problem arose, they were grateful to have the group meetings to draw support from.

Finally, there were interesting ethical dimensions of working within a collaborative setting that were raised by the school advisors.
Chapter 5
Conclusions and Recommendations

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations resulting from the study are presented in this final chapter. The conclusions report on the progress of a cohort grouping as a model of a collaborative teacher education program and an attempt to address the concerns which Eastman and Echols (1998) raise with regards to the lack of information about the school advisor’s roles, motivations and preparation.

Based on the literature on collaborative teacher educational models and the importance of the school advisor in teacher education (Clarke, 1997; Macdonald, Baker & Stewart, 1995; Tsui, 1995) it was expected that the cohort grouping would provide instruction and opportunities in a cohesive and collective way. Although there were similar ideas, philosophies and beliefs, the roles of the school advisor were not prescriptive and therefore the practical experience was shaped differently in each classroom.

5.1 Conclusions

The school advisors were convinced that the confidence in their roles and the ease with which the school participated in the Richmond Practicum Project was due to the amount of time invested over the years in the Project. There are five key categories which capture the essence of the advisor’s perceptions of their practice: role, motivations and cohort groupings, preparation and training, improvements and professional/ethical considerations.
5.11 Roles

Relationship building proved to be an essential part of the school advisor's role. Most of the subjects felt that these relationships were based on reciprocal learning and did not take on a hierarchical form. This supports the phenomenological approach which May and Zimpher (1986) describe as occurring when the school advisor and the student teacher work as a team to achieve a better understanding their own teaching styles (p.90). School advisors felt that being able to promote a sense of independence in the classroom was the most important opportunity they could provide to their student teachers.

The partnership identified one of the key responsibilities for the school advisor as being the principal evaluator of the student teacher’s progress with the faculty advisor acting as a liaison to all parties involved. However all of the subjects indicated some uneasiness with this responsibility and chose to evaluate the student teacher with the help of the faculty advisor. All anecdotal evaluations and formal report writing was either discussed or written together, thus changing the role of the faculty advisor and placing new demands and needs on them.

When subjects described their roles as school advisors there were common themes which emerged. They referred to the importance of the mentor / mentee relationship, the evolution of their roles over time, and encouraging independence in student teachers. However, how they modeled and communicated this in their classrooms and to their student teachers was imbedded in their own personal beliefs and philosophies about teacher education. These individual styles were brought forth and comprised the collective of the cohort grouping. This was a redeeming feature of this project and
supports Gordon (1992) proposal that there is a “new paradigm” shaping supervisory 
practices. Specifically, this describes Transition 3 of the paradigm shift occurring when 
there is a denial of a single approach to instruction or supervision.

Motivations and Cohort Groupings

Motivation

The selection process for school advisors from the onset has been voluntary. In its 
first year of the Project, the principal personally asked teachers to participate. There 
was no formal screening or selection process for participants who wanted to be 
school advisors.

All subjects insisted that the primary motivator for participation was to continue 
to develop their own professional development. Subjects indicated that another motivator 
was the willingness to establish an intensive relationship with student teachers over a 
brief period of time.

Cohort Groupings

Subjects attributed their success in the Richmond Practicum Project over the last 
six years to the cohesiveness of the school advisor group and the staff. Subjects felt that 
both the school advisor group and the student teacher group empowered each other and 
helped to socialize each other into their practicum environment. These results are 
consistent with McNally, Cope and Inglis (1997) where in a non-collaborative 
environment the psychological stress of non-inclusion was evident among student 
teachers.

The school advisor’s weekly meetings had both a common purpose and also 
served a different function for the subjects. While all agreed that the group meetings
promoted teamwork and continuity within the program, subjects used this forum for different purposes. Some subjects felt that group meetings served as an informal informational exchange while others went to have ideas validated and see what others were doing in their classrooms with their student teachers.

School advisors felt that there were certain characteristics of the program that allowed them to carry out their roles with ease. Funds provided for release time and associated costs coming with each student teacher group were looked upon as a form of support and commitment from the university. School advisors appreciated the structure of the practicum timeline because it provided time to build relationships with staff and students in a timely manner, and permitted the student teacher to experience their practicum in gradual steps. Also appreciated by the subjects, was the marking of integral points during the practicum with various celebrations along the way.

5.13 Preparation and Training

School advisors who had university coursework in supervision considered it valuable to their development as school advisors and essential to the professionalization of the role. These subjects felt that some form of supervisory training should be considered a prerequisite for school advisors participating in the Richmond Practicum Project. Those subjects who did not have formal supervisory training felt that their teaching experience over the years helped to form their roles as school advisors. These subjects indicated that they would not be interested in taking any formal supervisory training and further there has never been a request for this from student teachers.

Much emphasis was placed on the beginning years of the Project, for subjects the initial formation of the program at the school site was fundamental to the running of the
Richmond Practicum Project in the subsequent years. The faculty advisor who helped establish and set up the project, in its first year, was credited for helping to shape their understanding of supervision.

5.14 Summary of Suggested Improvements

When subjects were asked to discuss any drawbacks or improvements to the Richmond Practicum Project they focussed on the willingness and importance of building professional relationships with the student teacher and other members of the Practicum Project.

Suggested improvements included:

- having a faculty advisor who stays on site for more than one year
- having students complete some coursework requirements on-site
- student teachers being actively involved with the school’s resource team and experience in writing and implementing IEP’s
- providing further assistance for school advisors to adopt their evaluative role.

5.15 Professional / Ethical Considerations

Within cohort groupings there exists the potential for professional/ethical issues. Subjects were continually aware of the need to maintain professional standards in their conversations about what goes on in their classrooms with their student teachers. Yet there was no doubt that there existed a fine line between maintaining confidentiality, drawing support from other school advisors and being mindful of the pedagogical relationship which gives license to limited or qualified privilege.
5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations are drawn from the conclusions and emphasize the need for clearer role definition, increased preparation, and extended support in the Richmond Practicum Project. It is hoped that from this model these recommendations can be clearly extended to other cohort groupings.

**Recommendation #1:** That the faculty advisor be given a more defined role and serve as a partner in the evaluative process. Also that the faculty advisor be more actively involved in the relationship-building process.

Subjects rejected the idea that they were the primary evaluators—a premise that is contrary to the nature of this cohort grouping. They sought out the faculty advisor as an equal partner for the student teacher’s evaluations, therefore expanding the role as facilitator or liaison. The subjects also expressed a need to build more meaningful relationships with the faculty advisor and provide more continuity within the Richmond Practicum Project. Therefore it is recommended that faculty advisors be assigned to a school for more than one year and that a profile of the school be made detailing its history and unique features while in the Practicum Project. This information can easily be passed on to future faculty advisors.
Recommendation #2: That school advisors share the role of evaluator with the faculty advisor in the spirit of cohort groupings and that more extensive training be offered to school advisors to help them adopt their evaluative role.

The subjects clearly indicated that they were not comfortable and in some cases did not feel prepared for their role as the primary evaluator. In the spirit of collaborative education, a team approach to evaluation for the student teacher would be most beneficial. There is clearly a need for further training in this area. Some of the subjects indicated that they partly rely on an intrinsic feeling about their student teacher’s progress. There is a need to address where this informal process fits in the evaluation of the student teacher.

Recommendation #3: That supervisory training be made compulsory to potential school advisors but that this training be offered in different forms.

Subjects who had coursework in supervisory training praise the benefits it has had on the development of their roles as school advisors. Due to the informal selection process of the school advisors at the school site, there is a need to make supervisory coursework compulsory. This training, however, can take different forms. Partnered with the school district, the training can take on the form of a professional development opportunity, or can be offered as a series of after school workshops. University coursework in supervision could be offered during integral parts of the practicum where the school advisor could apply knowledge and skills in the direct environment with his/her student teacher.
Recommendation #4: That the Richmond Practicum Project's program components directly involve support staff, specifically Resource/ESL to address a true picture of learning and teaching in schools today.

The learning resource teacher plays a large role in the classroom and as such should be directly involved in the experiences of the student teacher during their practicum experiences in this collaborative model. It is essential that student teachers be aware of the students with individualized educational plans. In this school, the resource teacher made herself available when she could. It is recommended that the Resource / ESL staff be given a role in the cohort grouping and that additional release time be provided for IEP writing and consultation. In addition that this experience be considered a component of the student teacher's program specifications in the Richmond Practicum Project.

Final Word

As I reflect on this work in light of my own experience as a student teacher it becomes clear, to me, the need to professionalize the role of the school advisor. Through the subjects introspective look at their roles within this collaborative teacher education setting, we are better able to identify clear areas where roles need to be developed.

What I was reminded of when conducting these interviews, was that these subjects are real people placed in real situations. They have been asked to build relationships with many different people in a short period of time. They have been asked to be evaluators, supervisors, educators, and team players. By providing them with the proper tools and training in current supervisory practices and teacher education settings, we are helping them to strengthen their roles as school advisors. As evidenced from the
findings, it is my hope that the intrinsic feelings which school advisors rely on when building relationships with their student teachers and inform their judgement, will be well grounded in pedagogy.
References

A reflective piece by a cooperating teacher, explaining the different roles she plays and the effect her personal feelings has on her role.

Clarke highlights the importance of a coaching practicum for the role of school advisors. He highlights areas of professional development for school advisors that have begun at many universities. Emphasis is placed on training in areas of student teacher observation, communication, and evaluation. Uses practicum accounts from past course work to chart the progress of a required coaching practicum.

This study explored the applicability of Schon's notion of reflective practice for student teachers in practicum settings. Case studies of student teachers in a practicum found 15 reflective themes and up to 4 precipitants per theme, with 47 factors that enhanced or constrained reflection. Four strategies for promoting student teacher reflection are suggested.

The aim of this report is to document the perceptions and beliefs of a number of participants associated with the Richmond Project, a collaborative-based teacher education model, over the last four years. Note: key characteristics of program: teachers form nucleus of each school, schools apply and are selected, school advisors are principal evaluators, faculty advisor serves primarily as a liaison between school, university, and student teacher, student teachers serve practicum in one school.

Examined the results from a 1997 survey of recent graduates. Their focus was on the importance of school associates to the teacher preparation process. They sought out to analyze the survey data looking for information about the school associate's motivations, conceptions of role, preparation and their selection from the data provided by the student teachers.

Focuses on ways of conceiving and carrying out teacher preparation with special focus on initial teacher preparation, indicating where conceptual, empirical, and practical work are needed.

First-year teachers need mentoring by experienced, successful practitioners. This paper suggests a model for preparing mentors that was developed by school district personnel and university faculty. The model
provides 14 hours (distributed over the school year) of training in philosophy, basic mentoring, communication skills, peer supervision, observation skills, and conferencing.


Gordon, S.P. (1992). Perspectives and imperatives paradigms, transitions, and the new supervision. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 8 (9), 62-76. Defines "paradigm" as a profound change in the thoughts, perceptions, and values forming a particular vision of reality. Identifies six paradigm shifts in teacher supervision: from control to empowerment, from separate to integrated functions, from sameness to diversity, from occasional assistance to continuous support networks, from applied science to professional inquiry, and from mechanical to organic view of change.


Grimmett, P.P. & Ratzlaff, H.C. (1986). Expectations for the cooperating teacher role. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 37 (6), 41-50. A Canadian study to elicit from student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university advisors the expectations they held for the role of the cooperating teachers was compared to a 1971 American study and then to a 1984 American study to see if these expectations are culture- or time-bound.

Irvin, G. (1990). Collaborative Teacher Education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71 (8), 622-624. Training prospective and practicing teachers is the responsibility of both public schools and universities. To do the job efficiently, a single faculty and support structure for training teachers must be created. This must happen despite an environment encumbered with excessive bureaucratic regulation, autonomous political entities, and highly independent university faculty members.


This paper is based on an analysis of interviews with student teachers, which focused on the nature of the support they received in school in making the transition from student to teacher. The success of this transition appears to depend on conditions which are largely determined by others, but which serve as a crucial context for individual development.


This article considers how student teacher supervisors think about their teaching and about how they communicate their knowledge to student teachers. The study is based on interviews with and journals of six student teacher supervisors and the journals of their 20 student teachers. Results are reported.


Promotes supervision as a shared activity involving all stake-holders in the school including teachers, administrators, and parents. The book sees schools as communities rather than organizations, and emphasizes the student-teacher relationship rather than bureaucratic functions. There is emphasis on the moral implications of supervision and teaching.


Current teacher induction programs are reviewed. The North Carolina approach, which is based on collaboration between institutions of higher education and local education agencies, is described. The effects of the program on the teacher educators, the mentors, and the beginning teachers are highlighted.


Discusses how the tension and anxiety generated in the supervisory process undermines the potential of teacher supervision as a mutually beneficial and enriching experience. Reviews current supervisory approaches that attempt to redress this imbalance and outlines some problems with these approaches. Explores a collaborative model that tries to minimize tension and maximize potential benefits.


Summarizes results of a study offering both retrospective and prospective views of supervision, based on graduate students' definitions of supervision. Four emergent themes included the domains of supervision, supervisory tasks, supervisory relationships, and supervisor traits. Findings suggest that aspiring supervisors confuse administration with supervision and think that the hierarchical supervision model is still operative.


Wood, a cooperating teacher in the University of Wisconsin-Madison elementary teacher education program, shares her beliefs about the role of cooperating teachers in encouraging student teachers to become reflective teachers. She describes a number of strategies that she has used over the last fourteen years. She also describes several of the tensions and obstacles that she has experienced as a cooperating teacher in encouraging reflective teaching by her student teachers.

Two myths concerning the value of preservice field-based experience are discussed: (1) Practical school experience contributes to the development of better teachers; and (2) Teacher education's institutional structures are totally coercive and students passively conform to school bureaucracies' conservative norms.


This study reviews the research and examines competing explanations of teacher socialization that have arisen from different intellectual traditions. Also it addresses issues of the relation of the research to teacher education practice and issues related to the social relations of the research process itself.


An analysis of the form and substance of supervisory discourse between university supervisors and student teachers in two teacher education programs with similar organizational structures but different ideological orientations indicated a need for changes in the organizational context of student teaching if innovations in the curriculum are to be realized.


The findings from a two-year longitudinal study of the development of teaching perspectives by four beginning teachers are reviewed. Individual responses of these teachers to the environment in which they worked and the extent to which these teachers abandoned or maintained perspectives they began with are examined.


Explicates four types of teacher competence (technical, clinical, personal, and critical) as they might relate to supervision. Examines the levels of comprehensiveness and complexity within each of the competence domains. Illustrates approaches to supervisory practice within these domains.
Appendix A: Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

To: School Advisors of the Richmond Project
From: Jennifer Devecchio

As a fellow employee of the Richmond School District and a past participant of the Richmond Project, I know about the dedication your school has given to student teacher education. In my capacity as a graduate student, I would like to write a major paper about this student teacher education project.

Study Title: School Advisors Definition and Perception of Their Role Within a Practicum Project

Principal Investigator: Anthony Clarke, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, University of British Columbia

Co-Investigator: Jennifer Devecchio, M.Ed.. Graduate Student, Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, University of British Columbia

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this project is to investigate how school advisors define and perceive their role in the Richmond Practicum Project.

Study Procedures: The providers will be interviewed with an opportunity to review the interview transcripts. After analysis has been completed each provider will be provided with the results to serve as a member check. It is anticipated that the total time the subject will have to dedicate to the study is approximately three hours.

Confidentiality: All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be kept in the researchers home. Pseudonyms will be used in the thesis document.

Contact: If you have any questions or require any further information about this study, please contact Anthony Clarke (604 222-2003) or Jennifer Devecchio, 924-5487 (home), 668-6562 (work).

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia, Richard Spratley at (604) 822-8598.

Consent: I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. I also understand that I may keep the enclosed copy of this sheet for my records. My decision regarding this study is indicated below.

Yes, I would like to participate in this study.

_________________________  __________________________
School Advisors Name     Date

_________________________
Signature
Appendix B: Guiding Interview Questions

Interview Guiding Questions

1. Please explain what the Richmond Practicum Project was/is?

2. Please share any anecdote, comment or experience which you remember while being a school advisor in the Richmond Project?

3. What was your motivation to participate in the Richmond Project?

4. Did you feel that you received adequate training to participate as a school advisor?

5. Did you take the Supervision of Instruction Course offered by UBC? If yes, what did you learn from it?

6. Would you say that it is a necessary requirement for school advisor’s to have some form of training in supervisory instruction?

7. What is your philosophy of supervision; your beliefs about the best ways to work with student teachers?

8. How does working within the Richmond Project impact your own professional growth?

9. Please highlight any perceived difficulties that could have or may have arisen while you were a school advisor in the Richmond Project.

10. Likewise, please highlight any perceived advantages based on your experiences? (For the student teacher, the school, and the school advisor)

11. The nature of the practical experience is shaped differently in each school, based on the structure and needs of the group, how do you characterize yours?

12. Can you comment on the role of the faculty advisor and the teacher coordinator in the Richmond Project and how have they helped you as a school advisor?

13. Can you characterize the relationships within a cohort group—namely the dynamics of the school advisors as a team? What would a typical school advisor’s group meeting look like?

14. Based on your experiences, what are your perceived roles and responsibilities as a school advisor? How have they evolved since your involvement?

15. And how do they differ from the individual-based models of teacher education.

16. What recommendations can you make or suggest for the Richmond Practicum Project or any other cohort groupings for teacher education?
Appendix C: Sample Interview

The interview began at 3:30pm

Subject reviewed the consent form and signed it.
Subject was reminded that their name would not be used nor would their school’s name.
Also any names that may be used throughout the interview will be changed.

1. I: Before we begin and I refer to the Richmond Practicum Project, can you first define its qualities and characteristics?
2. R: What makes it unique? You are asking me that?
3. I: Yes.
4. R: Well there’s more teacher autonomy in the project and greater responsibility, I think than in other projects I have been acquainted with because the teacher has a greater responsibility in guiding the students and solving the problems and in evaluating the students, I think.
5. I: Yes it is unique in that sense. Alright. Could you share an anecdote or an experience or anything which captures the Richmond Project.
6. R: Well I actually think of two people when I think of the Richmond Project. One is ---- (first faculty advisor to work at the school), she brought a very special style to that project as the faculty advisor, a very caring and enveloping style that she had. Her way of working with teachers would be exactly the way you would want the teachers to be working with the kids--kind of thing--that stands out. And the other person which stands out is ---- (past project coordinator) because------and I co-coordinated it for a couple of years and he brought something very special to the project too in terms of tone setting for it. He had a lot of very special, almost ceremonial things that he did--luncheons and he would make these beautiful things on the blackboard at key points in the practicum and it really elevated the project in the consciousness of everyone in the school and those are the things that stand out.
7. I: Perfect, that’s great. What was your motivation to participate in the project?
R: Well ----(past project coordinator/ school advisor) actually coordinated it the year prior and he felt that there was a conflict of interest and he also felt the burden of the workload. And I'm a non-enrolling teacher so it seemed like a good idea, but the minute I got into it I realized that I couldn't do it without him. So we ended up co-coordinating it and all that personal side of it that he brought -he continued to do and the part I did was more the organizational --how to get people around to the different setting initially and so as the student teachers took hold and really got immersed in a classroom, my role in a sense was diminished. It had more to do with my professional role as learning resource teacher because as that student teacher took over, I ended up working with that teacher as I would have with the classroom teacher. That was--my role really shifted. And I didn't really become involved in any problem-solving aspects around particular students. That seemed to be handled within internal teams. As I said the teacher had a huge responsibility there and the faculty associate, and where appropriate a learning resource teacher may play a large role if they are also connected with that class. But I didn't find problems from the project diverted to me. I was less busy as the project went on and more busy in the beginning because my part was more the organizational part.

I: Ok. That's good. So would you say that a non-enrolling teacher should play the part as coordinator whether they are teemed up or...

R:---- said that was great and he didn't find the things that he was used to doing really made it so special to be at all burdensome. He enjoyed that part and I didn't find the organizing to be any trouble because that's not hard for me. So.

I: Well good.

R: It worked well.

I: I'm glad. Ok.

R: Its great working with the students. I mean--I love the part of it that I got--as learning resource teacher--working with people.

I: Were you working with them (student teachers) right away when they first started or was it more towards the end?
R: Well I actually tried to sit down with everyone with the IEPs (Individualized Educations Plans) for that class and really tried to create the team bond that I feel with the classroom teachers. But other years— you know— we had cutbacks and a lot of times I was just way too busy for that. I just kind of had to do that on the fly. I tried to make sure that the teachers were aware or kids with IEP’s and so on. But it wasn’t—a person could do more with that part of it. I guess that is what I am saying.

I: Good. I don’t know if this applies, just tell me if it does or doesn’t. Did you feel that you received adequate training to participate in the Richmond Practicum Project?

R: Well I did but that was because of ---- (first faculty advisor). ---- was extremely generous with her time and her insight and her knowledge and she would write these memos and because of ---- (past school coordinator/ school advisor) because ---- had done it before so I was phenomenally well supported and I did have that feeling, starting out, that I didn’t know what I was doing. I really needed to be told every step of the way. But once I was told that I could do it -- no problem.

I: A little pat on the back.

R: Yeah. Ok. Did you take the Supervision of Instruction course offered at UBC?

R: No I didn’t. I have had many years in the Board Office working with teachers and I don’t feel uncomfortable at all talking to teachers about their practice. So I didn’t feel the need to take it.

I: Would you say that it is a necessary requirement for school advisor’s to have some form of training in supervisory instruction?

R: I think its very good because I know people who have taken the course and all kinds of techniques are used which are really good. And sometimes when I see faculty advisors coming in, they do those sorts of things— videos, some type of focused observations that are terrific. My approach is more the way I work with teachers, which I really enjoy and were not making videos at that point, we are really— we’re talking, we’re journaling, we’re working back and forth the way people do-- you know— if you can get a level
of trust where you can risk to say how you see it and allow
someone else to say how they see it and work with those
differences. It's those tensions, I think that move your thinking
forward—not the part that goes smoothly—almost the opposite.
And I am very comfortable with that. I don't think people feel
threatened when—I have never felt that way anyway. It has always
been just heads down, talking kids, talking experiences, talking how
it went—you know, talking what to do another time. And mostly
teachers are talking, they know perfectly well.

I: So then based on your experience then, No you wouldn't say that
it is a requirement?

R: No I well, I think maybe what's made things fortunate here, is
that we have had good groups of students. So the way that you
work with a teacher would not be that different from the way that
you would work with a student when all is going well. Because it
feels comfortable, they are open to learning, they are open to
dialogue. I think a lot of the process kinds of things become more
critical when things maybe aren't going that smoothly.

I: Ok. Thank you. What is your philosophy of supervision, your
beliefs about the best way to work with student teachers? You may
have already answered this.

R: I think I have answered that. You need to do a lot of talking it
through. You need to be able to get in and do your thing. And part
of the gift, I think, that the teacher brings--I have seen it many
times—is to provide lots of support and talk about it in the
beginning and then gradually back off and let people get a feel what
its really like to take responsibility and then there is so much to talk
about after that. It's this process of talking it through, of reflection
and revision and feeling really comfortable and good about that,
good about what went great and good about what you are going to
try next time because that is the process basically. There is always
something that is niggling away that—you know—you want to try to
address next time. And there's always things to celebrate.
R: Well. I guess there is the difficulty, if you will, or the process that occurs around the student who is not taking hold for whatever reason—when its not working out that well. And um—I think the school advisor needs the feedback. So basically, the resource teacher, this doesn’t have to do with my advisory role, but I work very closely with the teachers. If the teacher would be able to honestly address in a professional way the nature of the difficulty as their coming to perceive it, often it is hard to pick up right away—and then feel able to look that through with the student in a supportive way. Where there have been problems is where the teacher feels that they are carrying it alone and nobody knows about the difficulties because you are given so much autonomy as a teacher in the project and you want to succeed and ...

I: The student teacher or the school advisor feels that they carry it alone?

R: You are asking for down sides. I think that is one that I have observed is that once or twice a school advisor has felt too alone with the process of supporting a student who in some way or other is weak or failing or not taking hold in a certain way and that those very open avenues that you need. Ok, just to give you an example, if I have a hard problem, I go straight to --- --- (principal). I close the door, I say “this is confidential, I’ve got a problem, I just need you to hear me out and I need your opinion on how to proceed”. You know—she’ll help me with the hardest problems. I think that a teacher needs that same help—a student teacher. And one of the down sides I have seen is that a teacher will hold that problem to themselves for too long of find out later—or thing will have deteriorated badly in some way or another. There is a certain conflict with the professionalism—you know what I mean.

I: I do know.

R: Ok. That’s one. Um. I did feel it when our advisor changed there was a lack of continuity, I felt that way.
I: ok. That’s good. Thank you. And I think you have spoken to the advantages earlier on.

R: I love the program. I think the program is totally exciting and on the right track. I think the students feel really valued and a part of the team. It is very unique in that way. It is very successful in that way. Especially the way — (former school co-ordinator / school advisor) worked that co-ordinating role and brought that about symbolically and then the way— with all the meetings were orchestrated the way that the teachers valued the student teachers and their contributions. It is just very successful.

I: Ok. Um. The nature of the practical experience is shaped differently in each school, based on the structure and needs of the group, how do you characterize yours? What is unique about your school?

R: Well I'm not that familiar with what is happening in other schools so that’s hard to comment on.

I: ok. Fair enough. Um. Can you comment on the role of the faculty advisor and the teacher coordinator and how do they help school advisors in defining their role?

R: Well the way — (first faculty advisor) did it was she had meetings— she had meetings and she gave people information and everyone had the same information and she worked with people, through the process. Meetings at critical points so everyone had what they needed. When they needed it. Other people had different styles— they work personally. — (first faculty advisor) would do once around the table with everyone there, so everyone could hear each other and benefit from that. Others might do— you know — (last faculty advisor) did that more personally. She went person by person and supported people more personally. So I think again, I see it all as communication, as that availability and the time to communicate with people and share past experiences with people and that gives people ideas. She (last faculty advisor) would bring people together from different schools so people could consider how to get everyone off to a good start, how to make a point of the point in the practicum when the student teacher took over the class, how to provide special opportunities at the end when things were winding down, so everything that needed to be considered was
winding down, so everything that needed to be considered was
considered in meetings by the group and you could learn about
what other people had done and so on. I thought that was
successful and she (last faculty advisor) spent endless time. I
wasn’t that aware of that part because I didn’t have a student
actually involved in dialogue with the various teachers and student
teachers in that project. But I wasn’t aware of that part because I
was playing a coordinating role, and a certain side of it, so I was
facilitating the meetings.

I: Right. The organization?
R: Right. Getting the room, getting the goodies (laughs) all that
important stuff, writing the memos.

I: I want to talk about these cohort groupings—the school advisors
meetings-- which are unique to the project. They were weekly...

R: Oh those meetings they have in the staff room. Well I wasn’t
really too much a part of that, to be honest with you. And that just
had to do with my teaching load and what fell at that meeting time
for me. It wasn’t that I thought it wouldn’t be valuable for me to be
there. And in fact, I thought that if I would go on with the project,
I should clear that block. Designate the project meeting block. I
didn’t co-ordinate this year, I did it two years prior to this year. ----
---- (current project coordinator) doing it now. Its a slightly
different project.

I: Yes it is. Its problem-based.
R: Exactly. ----(past coordinator/ school advisor) isn’t doing it
either. So any good resolves we had about evolving the project,
were interrupted. Number one by losing ---- (first faculty advisor)
getting a different advisor --we lost our continuity and then now its
changed and were not doing it.

I: Right. Um. Based on your experience, now this is where I would
like you to frame your roles and responsibilities as a project
member, what are they and how have they evolved since your
involvement.

R: Well the first year I guess, I was just trying to get through the
mechanics of it, like anyone else, only, gosh, I never quite had what
needed to be done, done on time. But really I felt that my role
needed to be part of the whole tone setting so all those initial times
you are meeting people and introducing people to members of the
staff and creating these events—orchestrating things so everyone
doesn't sit at the same table and all these kinds of things that you
get a good mix of things happening and to—I think there were
extraordinary measures taken to include people in the whole
workings of the school, not just one little classroom, over here, but
everything and all of that was done very consciously through raising
everyone's awareness in the school of the student teachers—who
they were, what they had to offer an--so I was a part of all that tone
setting and then the other role that evolved was the classroom
supporting role that it had. So when the students took over they
would be as conscious of the broad array of individual needs within
their class and as aware as I could help them with anything as a
teacher. So that involved--you know--meeting and talking and just
modeling I guess—that I would be there in the doorway if this kid or
that kid was doing this or that or the other or what about if this or
that or the other strategy or what ever so that the person would get
the feeling of what it was like to be in a team because that's very
much--so you wanted to inculcate people into the actual working
philosophy to this school which is that we are a group, we are a
team, we support each other.

I: and the Richmond Project would do that in principle vs. the
traditional....

R: The students became a part of the staff...absolutely.

I: Ok. I just want to end off with any recommendations that you
would suggest for the Practicum Project or any other similar
groupings in teacher education.

R: Well I would like to see District-based teacher education
programs, where the faculty comes out to the district to do the
coursework, the students are housed somewhere in the district, they
have a classroom or whatever they need to do their course work
and that part of the course work would involve actually trying or
observing what they are learning about in the classrooms or the
school where they are housed in. So that they--instead of having
the university sort of separate from the school district, I think that
the two should be one—the teacher education program should be
housed at the school and the blend of theory and practice could
then be--almost a daily reality. You could do lessons in your
reading methods course and then come in with kids and reading and
through a wide range of classrooms. You could do a lesson in
science and then come in and try a lesson on science, or co-plan a
lesson with some teacher or observe someone teaching in science or
however the instructor's wanted to.

I: Good. Have you heard about CITE? There is something similar
being done like that in the district. In this school you are currently
running the problem-based program...

R: I think that the problem-based idea is interesting, I worry about
a lot of the basic information that I do think that people need to
have--maybe more in a --I don't know that much about the
problem-based but I think at the same time it creates a reflective
stance, where you have to work with information that in a way that
you would actually have to access it and use it around real
situations and that's good. Then again you have got great people
here with us and the people make such a difference.

I: Great I think that is it.

R: Great

I: Thank You very much.

R: You are very welcome.