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AUTHOR Thiessen, Dennis
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ABSTRACT

In February of 1988, four Ontario school boards in the metropolitan Toronto area, the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education formed the Learning Consortium. The Consortium constitutes a partnership to initiate innovative programs in field-based teacher education, with an emphasis on improving the quality of education in Canadian schools. Over a three-year period, each partner will contribute people, time, and money to an expanding and increasingly complex set of activities. This summary formative evaluation briefly reviews, from the evaluator's perspective, the initial activities of the Consortium, conceptualizes and examines the meaning of formative evaluation with reference to the experiences of the first year, and argues the importance of reflexivity to the formative evaluation process. The basic position forwarded is that both Consortium participants and the evaluator act as formative evaluators. As a whole, the Consortium provides a forum for considering the conceptual and empirical possibilities of formative evaluation. During its first year, the planning group consisting of representatives of each of the six organizations and the full-time consortium coordinator met monthly to develop, manage, and review the program. An approach of methodological and programmatic reflexivity was established for participants and the evaluator in development of the formative evaluation and of the improvement program. (TJH)

BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP

THROUGH FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Dennis Thiessen
Faculty of Education
University of Toronto
371 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5S 2R7

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In February, 1988, four Ontario school boards in the metropolitan Toronto area, the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto (FEUT), and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) formed the Learning Consortium, a partnership to initiate innovative programs in field-based teacher education. For a three year period, each partner contributes people, time, and money to an expanding and increasingly complex set of Consortium activities. I am involved as a formative evaluator responsible for documenting, critiquing, and facilitating the development of the Consortium.

In the following sections, I briefly review the initial activities of the Consortium, conceptualize and then examine the meaning of formative evaluation in the experiences of the first year, and argue the importance of reflexivity to the formative evaluation process. The basic position of the paper is that both the Consortium participants and myself are formative evaluators, situated differently within the program and governed by different emphases and expectations, yet faced with similar challenges and endeavours. We share, to different degrees, the self-conscious experience of building understanding, supporting our mutual development, and facilitating implementation within the program.

Learning Consortium: The First Year

The aim of the Consortium is to improve the quality of education for schools. Generally the six partners work together to initiate and implement programs for preservice, beginning, and experienced educators, to evaluate these programs and generate insights into teacher development, and to disseminate new knowledge and practices. In each activity, the Consortium embodies and encourages inquiry, reflection, and collaboration (Watson, 1988).

In the first year, the planning group consisting of representatives from each of the six organizations and the full-time Consortium coordinator met monthly to develop, manage, and review the program. Some of the major initiatives include

the following:

. Summer Institute: two week intensive training in cooperative learning, coaching, and management of change. 100 teachers, resource people, and administrators from the four school boards and FEUT attended.

. Follow-up and Support: broad range of workshops and school visitations to assist the Summer Institute participants in the implementation of cooperative learning. Two consultants seconded to the Consortium and FEUT respond to most of the requests for support.

. Cadre of Trainers: ten days of training dispersed over a six month period to develop a group of specialists in classroom management, instructional skills and strategies, and cooperative learning. Forty teachers and consultants from the six Consortium partners are involved.

Other important but less formal practices are the networking, reflective, and monitoring strategies of the coordinator, the bridging and implementation actions undertaken by the planning group members within the unique culture of their respective organizations, and the emerging linking and capacity-building initiatives by Summer Institute participants in their schools. The web and wave of Consortium activities encompasses and influences many levels within and among the six organizations.

I became a faculty member at FEUT six months after the official formation of the Consortium. Though the first major initiative, the Summer Institute had not occurred, I, as the formative evaluator, had to move in a hurry to catch up with a program and Consortium structure that were already changing organically and proceeding in many directions. To date, my major evaluation experiences include the following:

. Development, negotiation, and approval of the formative evaluation proposal with the planning group.

- Participant observation at the two week Summer Institute.
- Documentation (feedback sheets, semi-structured surveys) of the Summer Institute participants' views during, immediately following, and three months after the Summer Institute.
- Informal conversations and open-ended interviews with the coordinator and the planning group members.
- Observation at and increasing involvement in the planning group meetings.
- Ongoing case study of Summer Institute participants at one school in each of the four school boards.
- Record of relevant documents (memos, reports, agendas, etc.) generated by the Consortium, school boards, schools and individuals.
- Coordination of other inquiries: observation of the cadre of trainers' program by the coordinator; log of the activities of the seconded consultants by an OISE research assistant; examination of teacher thinking with two Summer Institute participants by an OISE graduate student; and case study of teachers working with teachers in one of the Consortium schools by an independent researcher.

These experiences provide a foundation for the description and judgment of what actually happens, the critique of the program's fundamental assumptions and values, and the examination of the intended, and realized effects of the various Consortium activities. The information from formative evaluation builds a database of case studies, perspectives, and arguments which enable the Consortium participants to engage continuously in critical and constructive program improvement.

Meaning of Formative Evaluation

Surprisingly few evaluators have elaborated or proposed alternative constructions to Scriver's (1967) original differentiation between formative and summative evaluation. McClintock (1984) outlines a conceptual framework for the design of formative evaluation. In a paper entitled, **How can evaluation become formative?,**

Fiddy and Stronach (1987) develop an educational theory of the relations between evaluations and projects. Herman, Morris and Fitz-Gibbon (1987) elucidate procedural distinctions between formative and summative evaluation. Numerous formative references are also embedded in reports of responsive evaluation (Stake, 1975), illuminative evaluation (Parlett, 1981), contextual appraisal (Sirotnik, 1984), naturalistic evaluation (Guba, 1987), and action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Despite these contributions, most formative evaluations use the language of program improvement without conceptualizing the implications of what this means in practice.

In formative evaluation, improvement occurs through the interrelated pursuit of understanding, education, and action. These three aspects of formative evaluation are moments in an ongoing, holistic process. Each moment is conspicuous for its own set of activities and priorities but ultimately derives meaning from the interconnection with the other two moments. Both the formative evaluator and the program participants are engaged in this improvement process; consequently, both are formative evaluators. In essence, formative evaluation is the story of how the designated formative evaluator and the program participants forge a partnership in the various moments for improvement.

In the following sub-sections, I elaborate the meaning of each moment, discuss some early experiences, and examine the extent to which I can or should have similar emphases. Emerging from this review is the importance of reflexivity in formative evaluation discussed in the final section of the pages.

Understanding

Improvement evolves from an indepth understanding of how the program is planned, supported, experienced, and adapted. Much of the work of formative evaluators has traditionally focused on documenting the daily realities of development and implementation with a view to generating more effective ways of using and extending the

program (Harris, Bell & Carter, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 1986). This requires a closeness to the program, an intimacy that is more defensibly developed within a qualitative paradigm. Patton (1987) comments:

> A primary interest of qualitative-naturalistic evaluators is describing and understanding these dynamic program processes and their holistic effects on participants so as to provide information for program improvement (formative evaluation). The qualitative-naturalistic-formative approach is thus especially appropriate for programs that are developing, innovative, or changing, where the focus is on program improvement, facilitating more effective implementation, and exploring a variety of effects on participants. This can be particularly important early in the life of a program or at major points of transition. (pp.18-19)

The formative evaluator and program participants begin this search for understanding quite a distance apart. The formative evaluator is an uninformed outsider trying to gain insights from the understanding which insiders, the program participants, already have. Yet there is a movement towards each other, with the formative evaluator working "like" a program participant and the program participant working "like" a formative evaluator. They rarely meet and share equally the responsibility for understanding. Inevitably the formative evaluator remains as the primary researcher charged with understanding the program in all its micro and macro complexities. But there is a connection where both the formative evaluator and the program participants share the following experiences:

- Negotiate what, how, and why information is gathered.
- Adopt the qualitative paradigm to frame the methodology and interpretation of the

collected information.

- Build a rich description of how the program unfolds by varying the focus (organization, events, resources, support strategies, issues, context, etc.) and the unit (individual, classroom, school, school board, etc.) of observation and analysis.
- Develop and explore the range of insider's views, comparing the multiple perspectives people have about the program and their positions within the program.
- Become participants in and observers of the program and its formative evaluation.

As these experiences grow, the formative evaluator and the program participants construct a mutual understanding of and for improvement.

Is a partnership in understanding developing in the formative evaluation of the Consortium? The Consortium participants realize that they have the understanding but assume it is my job to access, record, and assess it. Some participants commented:

You're the expert, you decide what should be done.

My job is to teach, not to research.

When are you going to measure the outcomes?

Give us some hard data so we can prove to our trustees that the Consortium is successful.

For these educators, my responsibility is separate from theirs and is methodologically dependent on instruments and other measurement procedures. When the participants persist in role-bound perceptions of my involvement and in traditional, quantitative views of inquiry, then a sense of partnership is minimal.

Two developments suggest the emergence of or the potential for partnerships. I have frequent and informal conversations with the Consortium coordinator. I have regular interactions with the planning group members at their monthly meetings

and by telephone. We are developing a working knowledge of each other's situations and perspectives. As I participate more, they observe more. They structure what they know and seek further information to extend their understanding. The line between our roles shows signs of blurring as we see the value of working as partners.

The second development is occurring independent of my actions. Some teachers are documenting their cooperative learning experiences in journals or by videotapes. In two school boards, the planning group member has sought feedback through informal surveys. Other Summer Institute participants are keeping records of their classroom or coaching observations. Consortium participants are reflecting on and systematically examining their practices. With these educators, I can discuss the Consortium as co-investigators and thus begin the journey to a partnership.

The responsibility of rigorously documenting and reporting the intensive and extensive program of the Consortium will remain primarily with me as the participants get on with the task of implementing multiple innovations. There is neither an exclusivity nor a detachment in this division of labour. We are both trying to make sense of the program from our respective vantage points as participants and formative evaluator. In this sense-making venture, we raise our consciousness of and consequently, build on each other's understanding - a process where understanding and education connect.

Education

As moments in formative evaluation, understanding and education are inextricably tied to one another. The pursuit of understanding is educative; the experience of education stimulates understanding. What distinguishes the education moment is the emphasis on mutual development in the formative evaluator - program participant relationship. Improvement then is linked to the extent to which the formative evaluator and the program participants learn from each other.

The methodological literature in research and evaluation is replete with approaches to guide how the formative evaluator learns about the program and its participants (Stake, 1977). Program participants often experience a more restrictive mode, learning didactically in the transmission of findings from the formative evaluator. This creates a limited pedagogical relationship with little reflection, deliberation, or transformation in the ongoing exchanges between the formative evaluator and program participants. Fiddy and Stronach (1987) pose a more facilitative approach:

> The facilitative approach, soon led to a theory of readiness — a notion that the constructive and critical formative evaluation is not really possible until participants are ready to accept both the process and the evaluator. That 'readiness' is based on relationships as well as knowledge. It is governed by a pedagogy. Its basic question is not 'what is true?', but 'what are the educative possibilities in a given situation?'. The relative success of the exercise depended to a large extent on the alternative strategies available to the evaluator; on his ability and desire to discuss its approach; and on the consequent shifts in the perception of the evaluation process and of the development process by participants. (p.25)

Embedded in the facilitative approach is the recognition of expertise that both the formative evaluator and the program participants bring to the program and its evaluation. Within this reciprocity, they are equally committed to learning from the other and their continous interaction.

As the formative evaluator moves to participation and the program participants move to formative evaluation in the pursuit of understanding, they generate insights

into each other's world. They begin to explore how each could play a meaningful role in the situation of the other. The relationship becomes educative when they jointly engage in the following activities:

. Establish an ethos of mutual development.

. Reflect on what, how, and why program and evaluation practices change.

. Encourage a constructive and critical discourse about the program, the evaluation, and the link between the two.

. Through dialogue, elaborate the basis for distinct and common interpretations of particular problems, operations, and priorities.

. Provide and seek feedback to clarify the meaning of present realities and to examine what could and should happen in the future.

Prolonged collaboration within the action of the program encourages the educative partnership in formative evaluation.

To what extent are my relationships with Consortium participants educative? The Consortium participants understand that I learn about the program from what they say and do. They expect to learn from spontaneous feedback, formal and informal recommendations, and later reports. Some participants quipped:

Am I using cooperative learning correctly?

What should I do next?

I'm not sure if that's what you want in your research.

You want to know what you can do for me? I don't know. What can you do? Give me a few hints.

You're not going to tell us anything, are you? I'll probably read it first in the newspaper.

These educators demonstrate the passive way they see their role within evaluation. They feel like sources of data, providing some insights for me but getting little in

return. If they do learn from me, it will be in the form of a quick tip, a confirming reaction, or a retrospective 'aha'. The possibilities of an educative partnership in this one-way communication are limited.

Again, in the more extended relationships with the coordinator, the planning group members, and some educators in the four schools in which I am conducting case studies, there are indications of educative partnerships. I am beginning to feel like an "evaluator in residence" (Bickel, 1984) discussing issues, serving as a sounding board for alternative positions and strategies, provoking reaction through the expression of dissenting views, and reflecting out loud about the dilemmas and contradictions in the promises and practices of the program. My need to get close, to cultivate genuine deliberations, to relate as a colleague, to open my views for scrutiny, and to affect and be affected by the interaction are important conditions in my working relationship with the participants. We are teaching each other how to learn from our relationship — the beginnings of an educative partnership.

To be educative is more than an exchange of information. It is more than making the other knowledgable about your perspective on the program. It is a dynamic, social process where we probe and negotiate distinct and common interpretations, interrelate our program and evaluation experiences, and are equally committed to each other's learning. Inevitably this pedagogical partnership is embedded in the actions of the program itself.

Action

Action, when combined with the other moments of education and understanding, creates a dialectical tension among the three moments in formative evaluation. Program participants try to understand their efforts to plan, use, or adapt program practices. They learn from within, through reflecting on, and by interacting about these actions. Program actions provide both context and focus to the search for

understanding and the educational experience of mutual development. Improvement in the action moment refers to the ways in which the formative evaluator and program participants facilitate the implementation of the program.

The literature on facilitating implementation is split, with one set of references for program participants (Fullan, 1982) and another set of references for evaluators (King, 1988; Patton, 1988). In the evaluation literature, the emphasis is on utilization. The formative evaluator needs to insinuate himself or herself into the program, to get the ear of those who make decisions about program policies and interventions, and to respond to the needs of the participants — to make evaluation activities count in the daily realities of the program (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1983; McCormick & James, 1983). McClintock (1984) describe the implementation role of the formative evaluator as a "methodological fool". He states:

> When reducing uncertainty about program performance, the evaluator functions (in the traditional manner) as a technician or a methodologist. When uncertainty about program structure is increased, the evaluator functions like the medieval fool, a character who was permitted to make humorous, bizarre, or dangerous suggestions that stimulated creativity and catharsis in others. To improve effectiveness, there must be information about program performance, on the one hand, and alternative strategies and structures for program delivery, on the other. Combining these kinds of information will maximize the program's potential for effectiveness and adaptability in changing environments. Thus, it may be preferable to have formative evaluators who are methodological "fools" rather than foolish methodologists. (p.209)

The above portrayal is formative evaluation "for" improvement. Formative

evaluation "as" improvement (Holly & Hopkins, 1988) is a direct implementation strategy. Werner (1982) elaborates:

> Continuous evaluation planning and activity is an implementation strategy as it identifies emerging strengths, potential difficulties, and concerns as they arise at the school. Program implementation requires that evaluation has a strong formative role. It makes participants sensitive to situational factors and to adjust their planning accordingly; it allows them to devise implementation activities that need build upon the strengths that people have; it supplies participants with information of their program, and enhances communication; it clarifies the innovation in terms of the local situation and participants' beliefs about what is important; and it encourages explicit reflection upon the "process of putting something new into practice". Through discussion around evaluation information, people share beliefs and values, negotiate discrepancies and conflicts, and gain reflective distance and understanding of their own situation. Such a process of evaluation is change. (p.2)

This view establishes a bond between the formative evaluator and the program participants as partners in the change process. In particular, they enact the following strategies:

- Integrate program development and formative evaluation.
- Work at more than one level of program implementation.
- Raise consciousness about particular approaches, structures, or ideas and their consequences for practice.
- Examine alternative change processes, supporting and at times, initiating different implementation experiments or interventions.

. Determine ways to define, request, and respond to areas of assistance, guidance, or re-direction.

Though both are change agents, it is the program participants who assume the major responsibility in facilitating implementation. The degree to which the formative evaluator reaches a similar level of responsibility depends on the nature of his or her participation in the program.

How do my interactions with Consortium participants facilitate implementation? Most Consortium participants view my role summatively. To them, my agenda is to measure outcomes, confirm successes, or find deficiencies. Some participants observed:

> It's really working.
>
> I'm sorry, I haven't had many chances to try it out in my classroom.
>
> This is the best professional development program I've ever had.
>
> How can you say that? That's not what's happening in my school board at all.
>
> I thought you've supposed to evaluate cooperative learning not help me do it.

I am the person who wants to know results or needs an explanation about their performance. If I express a viewpoint, it implies or states a finding with these educators. I am a commentator on implementation, not a partner in action.

Some joint endeavours are either in negotiation or in their early stages. The initial silence to the questions: "How can we work together?" or "What can I do for you during the formative evaluation?" now has some answers. The planning group members, previously content for me to observe and record at their monthly meetings, now note when I have been quiet too long. They invite my reactions, debate my

positions, and suggest ways to involve me further. In the schools, I am working with a principal - vice principal team to develop alternative school-based implementation strategies and a teacher to study the social and educational situations of a small group of students. Other teachers have promised to call me before my next visit to discuss how I can best support their programs. As we get to know each other, we discover cooperative possibilities for change.

The Consortium participants understandably, are significantly beyond my involvement in implementation. This will continue. Yet with the diversification of my participation, they will realize in themselves and with me, that formative evaluation is a source of program enrichment, a force to extend the implementation process. In this awareness, we elaborate our partnership in improvement.

The three moments in formative evaluation, understanding, education, and action are interrelated aspects of an ongoing improvement process. Each moment has its emphasis; yet within each moment lies the other two. To live these moments requires a closeness among the formative evaluator and the program participants. At this point in the formative evaluation of the Consortium, this closeness is uneven. There are signs of an emerging partnership, a sense of how we both are formative evaluators, as we sort out our connections in program improvement. I assume a major role in developing understanding while the Consortium participants do the same in those actions which facilitate implementation. We share equally in our mutual development. Our very closeness to the program and each other not only stimulates a partnership for improvement but also demands a fourth moment-reflexivity.

Fourth Moment in Formative Evaluation: Reflexivity

Closeness may become a problem for the formative evaluator if "going native"

is the result. The pejorative meaning of "going native" suggests that the formative evaluator identifies so much with the program participants that he or she loses perspective and the ability to be critical. Yet one mission of the formative evaluator is to get close enough to understand what it is like to be a "native" in the program. The "native" is not necessarily mindless or one-sided about the program, but often capable of insightful reflection and judgment. To work like a "native" then, may provide the formative evaluator with a valuable sense of the program otherwise unattainable. Nonetheless, the formative evaluator is still confronted with the ongoing tensions in attempting to be both participant and observer, friend and stranger, insider and outsider, or developer and evaluator. To cope with these dilemmas, the formative evaluator relies on reflexivity (Siegle, 1986).

Reflexivity is about understanding and valuing subjectivity (Allender, 1986; Reason, 1988), and its essential place in any human endeavour, including research and evaluation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The formative evaluator is not a blank slate but brings a set of assumptions and beliefs to the task (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This subjectivity likely will change throughout the history of formative evaluation and consequently, will become a part of what is studied and critiqued. In this "passionate scholarship" (Du Bois, 1983), the formative evaluator maintains a sensitivity to his or her role and its influence on the program, the participants, and the context. In short, reflexivity is a critical consciousness of self in relation to one's program and evaluation experiences.

A critical self-consciousness is not restricted to the formative evaluator. Reflexivity compels both the formative evaluator and the program participants to pursue the following directions:

. Develop, implement, or evaluate programs whose significance is determined by personal choice and previous experience.

- Examine their own intentions and actions while involved in program activities.
- Use self-inquiry as a metaphor for elaborating the inquiry into the program.
- Alternate engagement and distantiation to penetrate how they influence and are influenced by the program and its evaluation.
- Maintain a "bifocular" critique, simultaneously interrogating the process of evaluating and probing the complexities of the program.
- Apply the same set of assumptions to frame their actions in and interpretations of the evaluation and the program.

The formative evaluator and the program participants use their critical self-consciousness to enhance their joint involvement in the program. Reflexivity pervades the other three moments but in different forms — methodological reflexivity in understanding, interactive reflexivity in education, and programatic reflexivity in action. In the following sub-sections, I discuss the reflexive connection with the other three moments, noting particular principles and procedures and some of the issues which affect the connection in the formative evaluation of the Consortium.

Understanding and Reflexivity

Methodological reflexivity requires those who search for understanding to maintain a vigilant watch on their own actions in inquiry. The "main instrument" under self-scrutiny is the formative evaluator, though methodological reflexivity also implicates program participants when they deliberately focus on sense-making activities. Critical self-consciousness in this form of reflexivity is a personal and introspective critique of how either the formative evaluator or the program participant builds understanding. It is a rigorous "subjectivity audit" (Krieger, 1985; Peshkin, 1988) or "retrospective review" (Thiessen, 1988) intended to uncover how one's position in the program influences and is influenced by approaches to

understand the program.

The major concern in this introspective search for connections is reciprocal reactivity. (Ruby, 1982) calls this the "hall of mirrors":

> But in anthropology another layer may be entered into this equation: the effect of the anthropologist looking at the native looking at the anthropologist. We enter the hall of mirrors, the infinite regress, yet it is undeniably necessary. The subject changes by being observed, and we must observe our impact on him or her and the resultant impact on ourselves and... (p.19)

Reciprocal reactivity sends the inquirer on parallel paths, critically examining the experiences of both participating in and evaluating the programs.

In the formative evaluation of the Consortium, I keep a journal of my perspectives and practices (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; Burgess, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1979). I describe my methodology, record comments I make to others about the evaluation process, and note what others say about my role. For example, some participants reacted:

> Oh, here comes the spy.
>
> Did you get that down?
>
> You take a lot of notes. What do you write about?
>
> You're just saying that to get us going. You did that on purpose, you planned it all along.

Where possible, I follow up such comments with a conversations about their views on my involvement. Their perceptions aid my self-analysis. On two occasions, I reviewed the journal, underlining key comments, transferring these comments on to file cards, and sorting these cards into categories. As a form of inductive analysis, it is similar to the interpretive procedures I use with the data from the Consortium

participants. Through the self-reviews, I critique my actions, revise my next steps, and examine the implications of my emphasis for my understanding of and contribution to the Consortium.

Methodological reflexivity for the Consortium participants, when evident, centres on their actions within the program. (See Action and Reflexivity below). It does not consider the processes they use to understand the Consortium's priorities or their role as the "main instruments" in their own formative evaluation. Those who use journals and videotapes tend to reflect on the instrumental effectiveness of their applications of cooperative learning and not on their position in the program. The Consortium coordinator and, to some extent the planning group members, demonstrate a collective type of methodological reflexivity in their periodic program reviews. There are indications however, that methodological reflexivity develops more in association with the interactive reflexivity in education.

Education and Reflexivity

Methodological reflexivity is a pause, a stepping back to be alone with oneself, to consider one's relationship with the program. It deepens the personal understanding of the improvement process. Interactive reflexivity is an ongoing phenomena, a social and empowering experience between the formative evaluator and the program participants. It broadens the basis for mutual development, the educational moment in formative evaluation, by raising the consciousness of each person as a teacher and learner in the program improvement process (Werner 1983) summarizes how understanding, education, and reflexivity work together:

Since critical reflection is a two-way street, it cannot be the task of an external 'expert' alone. Like a therapist, the evaluator is involved with people in mutual self-reflection. When engaged in questioning a school program he is also questioning himself. Initial critical reflection leads to further questions, which

in turn leads to a greater reflection. The process of reflection is dialectical, and the outcome of this dialectic is the mutual growth of self-understanding on the part of all who are involved. Therefore, the method and context is one of open dialogue and mutual questioning. All participants can question and be questioned. There are no positions of privilege, nor can critical sense-making be imposed upon someone. It must be open and free dialogue. (pp. 14-15)

The sharing of critical self-consciousness between the formative evaluator and the program participants makes the exchange interactively reflexive (Rowan, 1981).

Fundamentally, interactive reflexivity is about the ethics of empowerment. The formative evaluator and the program participants try to disrupt the conventionally separate and often unequal roles and become co-participants and co-evaluators. In the Consortium evaluation, we began this transformation in power with the following agreement:

The participant and the evaluator will:

- negotiate the focus and the approaches of the evaluation. Though these will be determined at the beginning of each year, changes can be made at any time by mutual consent.
- respect the confidentiality of all conversations, documents, and (unless otherwise requested or permitted).
- help each other understand the information generated or shared in the evaluation. Through regular interaction, descriptions, interpretations, and judgment will be checked and re-checked. Different positions or conclusions are acceptable and will be represented.
- decide which information will be reported to others Information will only be used in either oral or written communication after the participant and the evaluator agree on what information will be released,

how it will be portrayed, and with whom it will be shared.

Informed and mutual consent have to occur in context and over time. A contract-like agreement neither ensures its practice nor equally empowers both parties. We often lapse into the old designations of the evaluator-as-expert and the participant-as-subject. Repeated discussions about their rights as participants and obligations as co-evaluator reminds the participants of the partnership we are attempting to create.

When I ask the Consortium participants to discuss their experiences, it is a call for a reflexive account. Their comments however, often detach themselves from the program. For example, teachers talk about cooperative learning in the classroom without directly portraying their involvement in the process. We still learn about the program vicariously through the exchange about each other's experiences. To enrich this further, I invite comments about myself and offer self-insights for their reaction. In this way, I encourage our interaction to become reflexive — "For in conversation, as in research, we meet ourselves" (Morgan, 1983, p.404). If our present cooperation about program inquiry moves to a phase of interactive reflexivity, then the collaborative level of partnership is possible (Hord, 1986).

Action and Reflexivity

Programatic reflexivity necessitates all who facilitate implementation to evaluate their actions in relation to the priorities of the program. The main facilitators are the program participants themselves, though the formative evaluator is also reflexively implicated when he or she works like a participant and uses evaluation activities as an implementation strategy. Both the formative evaluator and the program participants examine the extent to which their involvement is compatible with the intentions of the program, determine what can be done to enhance their involvement, and debate whether their involvement, the program priorities, or both

should be changed. Programatic reflexivity opens the implementation practices of each person to an indepth personal and social critique.

One implication of programatic reflexivity is that I work within the principles of the Consortium. Lincoln and Guba (1985) embody this implication in their concept of value resonance. They state:

> The problem of value resonance is simply this: To the extent to which the inquirer's personal values, the axioms undergirding the guiding substantive theory, the axioms underlying the guiding methodological paradigm, and the values underlying the context are all consistent and reinforcing, inquiry can proceed meaningfully and will produce findings and interpretations that are agreeable from all perspectives. But, to the extent to which they are dissonant, inquiry proceeds only with difficulty and produces findings and interpretations that are questionable and noncredible. (p.178)

In principle, this is a comparatively easy challenge. The Consortium endorses interactive professionalism, a notion which includes an ongoing exchange of resources, cooperative decision making, and shared expertise. These notions are consistent with the adaptive, deliberative, and integrative conditions of the qualitative paradigm. My research activities are resonant with the program.

As I get close and act more like a Consortium participant however, I meet the personal conflict between authenticity and dissent. I must participate and be perceived to be participating authentically, genuinely facilitating implementation. It cannot be a peripheral act, a playing on the fringe, or a superficial performance. I am a colleague to the Consortium coordinator, a contributing member of the planning group, and a resource person to some of the schools. In the spirit of the Consortium, I participate as a "native" to enrich the activities of the program. Yet is this

involvement authentic especially when I disagree with some of the Consortium initiatives? Can I facilitate implementation while at the same time increase my expressions of dissent? I have criticized the dominance of the one training model used to implement cooperative learning, suggested more inside-out change strategies (Hunt, 1987) and supported school-based implementation. These ideas are within the mandate of the Consortium but outside its present program. In my position as formative evaluator, I have the advantage of closeness unavailable to most of the program participants. Is my dissent constructive criticism or a subversive activity? I have posed this dilemma to the planning group for discussion and debate.

Some of the planning group members and school-level Consortium participants experience a version of the same dilemma. One planning group member wonders if the translation of the priorities in her school board is a creative variation or a counterforce to their involvement in the Consortium. A school, deliberately uses cooperative learning as a vehicle to implement coaching and other collaborative working relationships instead of following the current Consortium emphasis of using coaching as a vehicle to implement cooperative learning. A few teachers have some reservations about the orientation to cooperative learning sponsored by the Consortium. In these instances, Consortium participants become self-conscious through authentic involvement in implementation and then criticize their involvement and the program. Programatic reflexivity enjoins us to live out the tensions between facilitating implementation and questioning the basis on which we support this implementation.

Reflexivity is not only a check on unknowingly getting too close but a way of getting self-consciously close to the program. Methodological, interactive, and programatic reflexivity combine with the other moments — understanding, education,

and action — to create a more engaged and connected improvement process. At this point in the experiences of the Consortium, we are just beginning to penetrate this level of formative evaluation.

Conclusion

The involvement with the Consortium provides a forum for considering the conceptual and empirical possibilities of formative evaluation. In the early stages, the designated formative evaluator and the program participants are in distinct positions with few if any joint responsibilities. Their common commitment to program improvement initially leads to a range of experiences in three moments of formative evaluation — understanding, education, and action. As these moments increase in the development of the program, there is a movement towards and interaction between the designated formative evaluator and the program participants such that they both emerge together as collaborative formative evaluators with shared by differentiated expectations. The designated formative evaluator retains the central responsibility for building understanding while the program participants do the same for facilitating implementation. They assume equal responsibility in education, supporting the development of each other's program activities. Reflexivity, a fourth moment, adds a critical self-consciousness to the process transforming the relationship between the designated formative evaluator and the program participants into a genuine partnership. With the integration of the four moments, formative evaluation becomes a major force in program improvement.

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