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Collaborative Consultation
Practitioners' Perspectives

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher's opinions and experiences, addressing a variety of issues relating to consultation as it is practiced as a special education service delivery model. Definitions, service descriptions, perceptions, identified benefits and barriers, as well as personal, professional and process development were investigated from practitioners' perspectives. This examination was intended to provide a beginning stage in the process of implementing consultation on a school-wide basis.

This study reveals what it is like to be a teacher practicing collaborative consultation as a means of serving special needs students in integrated settings. The subjects were primary teachers in a small, isolated, rural community.

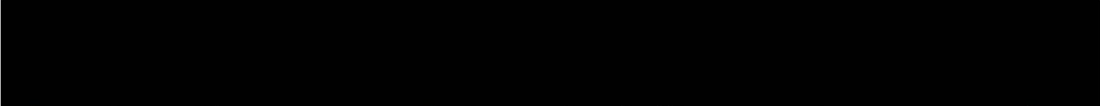
Research articles, opinion papers, and teachers' observations are examined. A phenomenological orientation is used to make interpretive sense of collaborative consultation. Surveys, interviews, journals and conversations were used to describe, interpret, and analyze teachers' experiences.

Themes of searching and hoping, difficulty and doubt, time constraints, support and reassurance, and reflection are revealed.

This study provides insight into the lived-world experiences of practitioners as they strive to collaborate to meet students' needs.

Abstract - (Cont'd)

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INTRODUCTION

It has been suggested that schools cannot improve without people working together (Lieberman, 1986). Changes in attitudes and practices of educators will be necessary to affect this improvement. Collaborative consultation refers to the process of teachers sharing the responsibility for the educational programming of all students. Collaborative consultation emphasizes joint planning, joint implementation, and joint evaluation between individuals (Hord, 1986). It means working together sharing resources, fostering more cooperation, creating partnerships and building trust (Greer, 1989).

This research focused on consultation as a special education service delivery model, with a special education teacher providing support to a classroom teacher. This model facilitated the personal and professional growth of the educators.

Consultation has increased substantially in the last decade, since the passage of Public Law (PL) 94-142 in the United States, and in response to increasing demands of regular teachers as a result of the mainstreaming movements in North America (Safran, & Barcikowski, 1984; West, & Cannon, 1988). Special needs students are currently being integrated or mainstreamed in regular education classrooms throughout the United States and in British Columbia (Ministry of Education, 1990; Reisberg & Wolf, 1986). Collaborative consultation has been proposed as a means of providing assistance for regular education teachers (Reisberg & Wolf, 1986; West, & Cannon, 1988).

Studies of the effects of consultation have typically reflected researchers' opinions, as exemplified by the review of literature from 1980 to 1990, but it should reflect the opinions and experiences of practitioners. Critical areas for consideration in implementing and evaluating consultation are professionals' attitudes, perceptions (Evans, 1981), and experiences related to the process (Friend, 1984). What we

need is an understanding of the consultation situation as it interconnects with the uniqueness of the individuals involved in the process. In depth qualitative studies of individual consultation cases are needed to guide practice, to evaluate its effectiveness, and to assist in making improvements in the process. Field studies, perception surveys, and impact assessments have been recommended by many researchers (DeDenus, 1989; Friend, 1984; Idol, 1988; Idol, 1989; Polsgrove & McNeil, 1989; West & Idol, 1987). We need to be able to offer consultation as a special education service delivery model in combination with its related research in the ways that participants require it.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' opinions and experiences, addressing a variety of issues relating to consultation as it is practised as a special education service delivery model. Definitions, service descriptions, perceptions, identified benefits and barriers, as well as personal, professional and process development were investigated from practitioners' perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The historical and theoretical context of consultation development and expansion was examined to aid our understanding of present circumstances. Current status regarding collaborative consultation, incorporating the questions of investigation are also described in the following section.

Historical Context

Service Growth

Consultation as a means of providing educational services to special needs learners has experienced fairly recent growth. Since the mid-seventies interest in consultation has developed extensively. As one of many influences affecting schools, decisions currently made about the practice of consultation will affect the development of future services. It is, therefore, important to understand the consultation movement from a broader historical perspective.

Studying the history of consultation could begin with the helping roles of primitive societies, professional helpers of medieval times, and medical consultants in the mid-19th century (Friend, 1988). This review will, however, focus on more current examples of consultation.

In the 20th century helping professionals, such as mental health workers, expanded the concept of consultation. As society changed rapidly, becoming increasingly complex, people had difficulty coping, making the consultation role more important.

As mental health services expanded into school settings, the issue of more clients needing assistance than available professionals to serve them became problematic (Friend, 1988). By the mid-60s traditional versus new consultation roles were being debated by school psychologists.

The 1960's were characterized by increased funding and special programming for handicapped students. The potential population for consultation also increased. In this decade the

foundation was established for using behavioral principles in school settings through a consultation model (Friend, 1988).

Attention to organizational factors pertaining to school climate and the quality of services there grew during the 1970's. The need for alternative services created through mainstreaming resulted in the development of the resource room model. Difficulties in meeting job demands were expressed. Consultation increased in importance as professionals tried to cope effectively in a rapidly changing, increasingly complex society (Phillips & McCullough, 1990).

By the 1980's consultation emerged as an effective model for educating handicapped students. The idea grew that segregating students was detrimental. As a result consultation models were, and continue to be, experimental for a variety of students, including mildly handicapped, physically impaired, and remedial or at-risk learners.

The Regular Education Initiative (REI) in the United States has increased the need for professionals to assist teachers dealing with special needs students, thereby facilitating the development of consultation. As a solution to problems associated with the system of categorizing children and programs, consultation is viewed as a philosophical and pragmatic merger between regular and special education (Polsgrove & McNeil, 1989). As the trend toward inclusion and integration increases, a shared responsibility for educational programming for all students is emphasized (Pugach, 1988). The REI suggests that as general classes become more individualized, referrals for special services will decrease (Bauwens, Hourcade & Friend, 1989).

Many professionals serving special needs learners are currently focusing on consultative approaches. Along with school psychologists, counsellors, and special educators, speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists and social workers are examining consultation. It is becoming apparent that although contexts, needs, talents

The key strategies used include "sophisticated diagnostic formulations, theme interference reduction, relationship building, and one-downmanship. Skill in discerning what's blocking consultees' problem-solving skills is necessary" (Conoley & Conoley 1988).

When teachers seek consultation, feel more self-confident and skilful, and use problem-solving approaches, success of the mental health approach is indicated.

Behavioral Perspective

Behavioral consultation, a more familiar school-based model, is a problem-solving framework aimed at consultee and child performance improvement. It is based on social learning theory, which considers overt behaviour to be influential in predicting a consultee's success.

The behavioral consultant's tasks involve defining problems, isolating influential environmental variables, and devising manipulations to reduce problem behaviours.

Behavioral consultants focus on consultees in an instrumental way, teaching a new way of responding to a student's appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. A straightforward, information sharing approach is used, with the child's behaviour being the primary target.

Numerous strategies, related to social learning and cognitive-behavioral approaches, are available. An understanding of learning principles and research evidence, along with communication skills are necessary.

The evaluation process of behavioral consultation is an extension of the initial data-collecting activity that begins with problem identification, definition and goal setting. Results are useful in modifying plans, and helpful in advertising consultation services. (Tindal, Shinn & Rodden-Nord, 1990; West & Idol, 1987)

Organizational/Process Development Perspective

The theoretical base of process consultation is the systems change theory which involves principles and guides for analyzing systems change (West & Idol 1987).

"Process consultation aims at making people more aware of the events or processes in their environment and how these events affect their work" (Conoley & Conoley, 1988, p.18).

Although education is more a process than a product, many educators are not receptive to process consultation, tending to be more content oriented.

As team memberships have created the need for skills in leading groups, setting agendas, caring for social/ emotional needs of a group, solving problems, managing conflict, giving feedback, communication, making decisions, etc., process consultation is currently becoming more valuable to schools (Conoley & Conoley, 1988, p. 18).

Process consultants focus on the interactions among people in work groups, trying to improve the problem solving and decision making processes. The actual targets may include "emergent leadership, time keeping, information on opinion giving and seeking, communication patterns, clarifying, feedback, compromising etc." (Conoley & Conoley, 1988, p.18). The aim is to improve group productivity as well as group morale.

Strategies involve data-gathering activities, data feedback activities, simulations, and didactic inputs. Feedback from group members provide evaluations of process consultation.

The critical incident technique of interviewing used in this research facilitates obtaining feedback regarding the consultation process and its influence on individuals' personal development.

An Ecological Perspective

It has been suggested that a unified perspective, integrating important components of major theoretical perspectives into a unitary decision-making model of

consultation would be most appropriate (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). Drawing ideas from each perspective may result in an improved conceptualization of consultation for special education teachers. The key task is to use theory to inform practice, applying knowledge about what helps people change their skills, attitudes, behaviour, and expectations. A prerequisite to these changes is an understanding of attitudes and critical experiences, as this study illustrated.

Characteristics of consultation which are common to all three theoretical orientations include: a) indirect service, b) collaborative professional relationships, c) recognition of consultee rights, d) problem-solving orientation, and e) attention to the two goals of immediate problem resolution, and increasing consultee skill/knowledge for independent resolution of similar problems in the future (Phillips & McCullough 1990).

Ecologically grounded special education teacher consultants' roles may involve delivering direct teaching and counselling services to children, offering direct services to teachers through in-service training and consultation, and providing indirect services to children by performing case management functions and parent consultation activities (Conoley & Coneley, 1988, p.19).

Current Service Delivery Models

Definitions

Although clear terminology is essential for consultation implementation and productive discussions, definitions are varied and unclear (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). The definition of the verb "to consult" reveals the dichotomy of the concept: "to deliberate together; to ask the advice or opinion of another". The two opposite approaches of mutual deliberation and expert advising emerge. The view of consultation as a process involving an expert solving an

existing problem is unlikely to be successful in schools (West & Idol, 1987).

Consultation has different meanings for different perspectives. In medical literature it refers to "the process by which a physician requests the expert advice or counsel of another physician" (West & Idol, 1987). In mental health terms it refers to " a process by which a consultant assists another professional, the consultee, in regard to a client for whom the consultee retains responsibility " (West & Idol, 1987). The process perspective refers to consultation as planned social change at a system level.

In education, consultation has referred to any support offered to regular classroom teachers for the purpose of generating, implementing, and evaluating strategies to alleviate defined problems (Reisberg & Wolf, 1986; West & Brown, 1987). Tasks of consultation may involve discussing educational problems, presenting ideas for use in the regular class, in-service, coordinating programs, observing in the regular classroom, performing curriculum based assessment, and demonstrating instructional techniques (Reisberg & Wolf, 1986).

Consultation is usually a process based upon an equal relationship characterized by mutual trust and open communication, joint approaches to problem identification, the pooling of personal resources to identify and select strategies that will have some probability of solving the problem that has been identified, and shared responsibility in the implementation and evaluation of the program or strategy that has been initiated (West & Idol, 1987, p.389).

Consultation involving mutual deliberation is referred to as collaboration, which emphasizes joint planning, joint implementation and joint evaluation between individuals or organizations (Hord, 1986). Shared responsibility and authority is implied. Collaboration means working together, sharing resources, fostering more cooperation, creating partnerships, and building trust (Greer, 1989).

Collaborative consultation may simply be a problem-solving and decision making process or it may be a special education service delivery option, providing support by a special educator to a classroom teacher (West & Idol, 1990). A consensus and clear understanding of the purpose is necessary. Three major purposes of collaborative consultation are a) to prevent learning and behaviour problems b) to remediate learning and behaviour problems, or c) to coordinate instructional programs (West & Idol, 1990). Consultation goals typically involve meeting the individual needs of students before referrals for specialized programs are necessary, and providing an alternative to the refer-test-place paradigm (Glatthorn, 1990)

Collaborative consultation is an interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. The outcome is enhanced, altered, and produces solutions that are different from those that the individual team members would produce independently. The major outcome of collaborative consultation is to provide comprehensive and effective programs for students with special needs within the most appropriate context, thereby enabling them to achieve maximum constructive interaction with their non-handicapped peers (West & Cannon, 1988, p.56).

Perceptions and Attitudes

The idea of collaborative consultation is very attractive, but the reality of this multidimensional process is more difficult and complex (West & Idol, 1987). The success of consultation is subject to the cooperation and attitudes of individuals involved (Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler & Strain 1988). How ideas are introduced, organized, supported and implemented dominate the process of change in schools (Glatthorn, 1987; Lieberman, 1986).

Change is difficult. It requires new ways of thinking and doing that are difficult to master and induces feelings of awkwardness. It often demands excessive effort and self-analysis. Moreover, it challenges needs for security and certainty by requiring classroom teachers to face the unknown. Thus, change typically evokes resistance and anxiety regardless of potential benefits (Margolis & McGettigan, 1988, p.15).

Historically educators do not naturally work together, being "more productive than reflective, more understanding of people like us than of those who are different, more comfortable in our own context than someone else's" (Lieberman, 1986, p.8). Whatever individuals bring to situations will influence the process of consultation: a) their relationship, b) the manner in which cases are carried out, c) what type of data are collected, d) what type of interventions are developed, and e) how programs are evaluated (Tindal, Shinn & Rodden-Nord, 1990). A common conceptualization of collaborative consultation principles is essential for program success (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). However, regular and special educators' frames of reference related to the ways they view teaching and learning differ. Regular class teachers focus on the entire class and increasing overall achievement; special educators focus on one student and on individualized learning (Glatthorn, 1990). Both groups will need to make shifts in service delivery. The specialized program orientation will need to shift to a school-wide or systems perspective in educating all children. An expert orientation will need to shift to truly collaborative, shared decision making and problem solving roles (West, & Idol, 1990).

Different personnel have different perceptions of the consultants' role, resulting in diverse role demands and a lack of congruence in perceptions (DeDenus, 1989; Glatthorn,

1990). Few consultants have had clear role guidelines within their districts (Idol & West 1987; Evans, 1981). Consultation may involve both direct and indirect services. Direct services focus on the remediation of basic skills using curriculum-based assessment and instruction, continuous monitoring of student progress, and preparation for transfer. Indirect services provide assistance to regular teachers by assisting, supporting and advising. This service includes assessing learning, study skills and behaviour problems in the classroom; determining academic difficulties among students, sharing in decision making for instruction and student management, monitoring data-based instruction, reordering the sequence of classroom curriculum materials to facilitate progress, offering assistance to large group management problems, providing in-service training workshops, training and supervising cross-age tutors, and working with parents (Idol, 1989).

Margolis & McGettigan (1988) have identified several negative attitudes that teachers have developed in response to consultation:

- a) a lack of mutual understanding of the distinct demands of the other's role
- b) a consultee view that interventions cannot be carried out, given his or her teaching approach, classroom situation, skill level, or philosophy
- c) regular teachers' negative attitude toward mainstreaming
- d) perceptions of threatened autonomy
- e) concern about being responsible for less than satisfactory progress
- f) a lack of support from administrative personnel
- g) inadequate training
- h) time consuming
- i) unlikely to produce desired results
- j) modifications will be imposed on teachers without their substantive participation

These attitudes and perceptions will need to be addressed, and, with positive experiences they should dissipate.

According to the expectancy theory "when people perceive outcomes as important and the associated rewards as desirable, they consciously put forth the effort required to achieve these outcomes commensurate with perceptions of the value of the reward and the probability of obtaining it" (Margolis & McGettigan, 1988, p. 16). The present study provided a description of the perceptions teachers have regarding the outcomes of collaborative consultation. People value freedom and will typically assert themselves to control their lives, according to reactance and control theories (Margolis & McGettigan, 1988). Teachers who perceive collaborative consultation as restricting their freedom need to be identified and assisted in working through those concerns in order to encourage personal and professional growth.

Attitudes of consultants are also critical to the success of collaborative consultation. Effectiveness requires empathy, genuineness, nonpossessive warmth, and positive mutual regard. An attitude of sharing and problem solving, not expertise, is required. According to consultees' perceptions of successful consultation outcomes, characteristics such as consultant cooperation, emotional stability, personal adjustment, ability to inspire confidence, empathy, flexibility, warmth, and understanding are facilitators.

Implementation

Implementation of collaborative consultation involves the development of procedures, identification of critical variables, and identification of benefits as well as possible barriers. This review of literature will focus on the identification of benefits and obstacles related to consultation.

Critical Variables

Variables that are influential in program implementation include school environment, staffing patterns, staff development, organizational structure, support services, resource allocation, and family involvement (Wang & Zollers,

1990). As the number of possible variables is extensive, attention will be directed to variables related to programs, the consultation process, and consultant/consultee personnel.

The expectation that a single professional can be an effective teacher as well as successfully manage the tremendous range of tasks involved in consultation is unreasonable (Friend, 1984; Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler & Strain, 1988). It appears that "super" teachers are expected.

...in addition to the primary responsibility of providing direct instruction to handicapped students, they are expected to confer with regular education teachers, observe students in mainstream settings, conduct in-service training, and so on, through a seemingly endless list of job duties (Friend, 1984, p.249).

It is not solely in the tremendous range of consultation tasks that expectations are unreasonable. The consultant and consultee characteristics and skills that are considered necessary may also be extreme.

Benefits and Potential Barriers

Throughout the current research several benefits of consultation have been mentioned, such as economic savings, enhanced project outcomes, improved communication, mutual understanding, material sharing, greater flexibility, reduced referrals for special education, consensus on educational goals, and improved practical aspects of teaching. In order to realize the strengths of consultation a multitude of impediments need to be addressed. The potential barriers to the implementation of collaborative consultation are numerous. Critical areas for consideration involve staff development, scheduling time to consult, as well as planning and problem-solving vehicles (West, J., & Idol, L., 1990). Barriers that have been identified by several researchers (Evans, 1981; Hord, 1986; Idol & West, 1987; Phillips & McCullough, 1990; Reisberg, & Wolf, 1986; West & Idol, 1987) as hindering consultation have included:

- 1) inconsistent terminology
- 2) lack of overarching theoretical orientation
- 3) limited verification of critical factors in training and implementation
- 4) complexity of schools
- 5) inherent difficulties of instituting system-level innovations
- 6) lack of preservice training
- 7) need for continuing professional development
- 8) time constraints
- 9) lack of administrative support
- 10) teacher attitudes/resistance
- 11) promotion of consultation
- 12) consultant skills
- 13) lack of resources
- 14) limitations of organizations in transferring resources and power
- 15) lack of skills for cooperative decision making
- 16) incompatible structures of organizations
- 17) lack of concepts for organizing the parties
- 18) poor matches between what one party can offer and what the other needs
- 19) lack of time
- 20) insufficient role definition
- 21) increased needs of mainstreamed teachers
- 22) lack of consideration for multiple responsibility
- 23) inadequate approval criteria
- 24) lack of professional preparation
- 25) special education funding discourages consultation development
- 26) lack of systematic attempts to evaluate team processes and their educational outcomes
- 27) inadequate operational definition of consultation
- 28) methodological limitations in the research

This study will examine teachers' perceptions of the benefits and obstacles related to the consultation process.

Evaluation Procedures

Determining if evaluation procedures have been implemented to monitor consultation service efficacy is difficult, as there does not appear to be universal agreement on what makes consultation effective. Variables influencing the process, as outlined, are extensive. Comprehensive evaluation procedures necessary involve monitoring the

effectiveness of the teachers, instruction, products, programs, processes, research methods, and ecological influences. It has been suggested that consultation may not be researchable (West & Idol, 1987). The flexibility necessary for delivery of consultation services does not lend itself to research demands for control or for comprehensive evaluation. Each consultation service is individual and unique, making general evaluation procedures difficult. Perhaps research needs to focus more on specific individual cases than on overall generalizations regarding consultation. With this in mind, a small investigation of some perceptions and effects of consultation is presented.

Summary

Consultation has been practised in various forms for many years, but has only recently experienced growth as a means of providing educational services to special needs students. Consultation has been proposed as a means of alleviating problems associated with a system of categorizing children and programs, seen as a merger between regular and special education. The integration of special needs students in regular programs increases the instructional and management demands experienced by regular teachers. Collaborative consultation between special education personnel and regular teachers is proposed to reduce the demands and to facilitate mutual professional growth.

and commitments may differ, schools cannot improve without people working together (Lieberman, 1986). Social relations are known to influence work commitments, participation and creativity in work (Lieberman, 1986). Bringing teachers together with a common focus enables them to share ideas about teaching and learning (Glatthorn, 1986). An important component of education involves facilitating mutual professional growth in order to effect improvements for students, and to make use of a shared language about teaching (Glatthorn, 1990). With increased instructional and management demands experienced by regular teachers, supportive and collaborative services from special educators would facilitate mutual professional growth.

Theoretical Perspectives

Consultation models differ regarding goals, assumptions, operating procedures and limitations, but most often they belong to one of three major theoretical perspectives: mental health, behavioral, and organizational/process development.

Mental Health Perspective

Mental health consultation has the longest history and is based on the most traditional psychological understanding of human behaviour (Margolis & McGettigan, 1988).

It was developed in the 1960's by psychiatrist Gerald Caplan. His proposal to enhance job effectiveness through a coordinated process of case discussion and problem solving was revolutionary, viewed as a great departure from classical Freudian or psychodynamic psychology.

Mental health consultants have diverse goals, but in schools they work to improve children's learning or behaviour, most often by working with teachers. An assumption made is that some student difficulties are exacerbated by teacher characteristics. Direct work with children is typically only to model appropriate styles or strategies, or for diagnostic procedures.

Definitions, roles, tasks, goals, and purposes of consultation are currently being debated by educators, as revealed by the literature review. Perceptions and attitudes of personnel involved in collaborative consultation need to be examined by field research. Numerous benefits and barriers to consultation have been identified by researchers, but are yet to be verified by practitioners.

Since collaborative consultation has been proposed as a means of providing assistance for regular education teachers, their perspectives should be an integral component of consultation research. The opinions of researchers alone will not suffice in providing a clear view of the consultation process. Teachers and researchers, as well as special education personnel, should be practising collaborative consultation, trying to improve communication, understanding and the consultation process.

This research was an attempt to close the gap between research and practice. Each consultation service is individual and unique, making general evaluation procedures difficult, and controlled research inapplicable. An in-depth qualitative study of individual consultation cases was presented to assist in the implementation of consultation, to guide practice, to evaluate its effectiveness, and to assist in making improvements in the process.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

During times of mainstreaming, reduced resources, and increased demands on regular teachers, working collaboratively is essential (Reisberg & Wolf, 1986; Safran & Barcikowski, 1984). Classroom teachers need increased support services, as the "least restrictive environment" for handicapped students becomes emphasized (West & Cannon, 1988).

Research indicates the need to affect personal and professional growth in collegial ways. Many educators easily fall "behind the times", needing external stimulation to adjust practices, attitudes and perceptions. As indicated by the new education program in B.C., the Year 2000, changes in attitudes, perspectives and practices of all education personnel are long overdue. Collaborative and consultative approaches are recommended (Ministry of Education, 1990).

Small school districts experience extreme resource deficits due to the current fiscal framework which is based on student populations. With limited resources and few special needs students in small districts, one resource person is often responsible for services for all categories of special needs. More collaborative and consultative approaches, involving all teachers, are needed (Glatthorn, 1987). This investigation provided an examination of the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of professionals working in a rural, isolated area, where implementation of consultation as a special education service delivery model was being

considered. Research needs to focus on attitudes and perceptions (West & Idol, 1987), district level philosophy (Moore, Fifield, Spira & Scarlato, 1989), actual interactions taking place during various stages of consultation (West & Idol, 1987), and improved means of evaluation. Research should promote changes in education practice, teaching and teachers.

An important component of a consultant's role is to develop positive attitudes with colleagues (Evans, 1981; Friend, 1984). Positive perceptions of consultation may influence others' attitudes, while enhancing the potential for program success (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). An initial step in implementing a consultation program is to determine school personnel's perceptions of the concept (West & Idol, 1990). Faculty concerns and receptiveness need to be assessed and addressed in the initial implementation phase (Reisberg & Wolf, 1986; West & Cannon, 1988). This investigation focused on a small group as well as on specific individual cases. A few teachers' perceptions and experiences were examined in depth, in an attempt to identify supportive personnel, and to understand teachers' personal and professional growth. I wanted to understand what it means to be involved in implementing collaborative consultation and, therefore, I have asked questions focusing on the nature of this lived experience. It was not my intent to conceptualize it for explanation, but to describe it for understanding. Van Manen (1984) describes this process:

Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience...the study of the lifeworld - the world as we immediately experience it rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or theorize about it. Phenomenology aims to come to a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences.

This examination was intended to provide a beginning stage in the process of implementing consultation on a school-wide basis. Changes in consultant and consultee behaviour and perceptions as a result of consultation were investigated. The development of personnel involved in the consultation process was described.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Several questions were investigated. What do teachers mean by "consultation", and how is it practised? What are teachers' perceptions of the benefits and obstacles of collaborative consultation? How have consultation experiences influenced teachers' subsequent personal or professional development? What is the lived experience of consultation? I believe the best attempt to try to understand this is an interpretive or phenomenological one. van Manen (1984) suggests that we understand meaning only through "a very caring attunement - a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live a life." (1984, p. 38) I have tried to attune myself to this project in the way van Manen suggests. This project is a small attempt to try to understand the experience. My attempt might be considered successful if the descriptions offered show to the reader the significance of the experience in a fuller and deeper manner.

Teachers described what consultation means to them and provided descriptions of incidents, explaining how it happens in actual practice. They revealed their perceptions of consultation by evaluating the potential benefits and obstacles which were identified by a review of the research literature from 1980-1990. Results were used to identify what teachers meant by consultation, and to determine the factors that the teachers considered to be most influential. Changes

in perceptions and in personal or professional growth, which followed from consultation experiences, were also investigated. "Leaders who want to nurture collaborative projects...should design projects that allow individuals on each side to gain professionally and personally" (DeBevoise, 1986, p.12).

The researcher along with three voluntary participating teachers developed a research partnership to mutually explore an area of interest, and to provide information describing the experience of personnel involved in the process of implementing consultation as a special education service.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of the survey, the term "collaborative consultation" requires further description. Based on the research reviewed, the following description was used to represent the consultation process.

Consultation is usually a process based upon an equal relationship characterized by mutual trust and open communication, joint approaches to problem identification, the pooling of personal resources to identify and select strategies that will have some probability of solving the problem that has been identified, and shared responsibility in the implementation and evaluation of the program or strategy that has been initiated (West & Idol, 1987, p. 389).

Collaborative consultation involves mutual deliberation, emphasizing joint planning, joint implementation and joint evaluation between individuals or organizations (Hord, 1986). Shared responsibility and authority is implied. Collaboration means working together, sharing resources, fostering more cooperation, creating partnerships, and building trust (Greer, 1989).

In this study, collaborative consultation incorporates this definition as it relates to a special education service, emphasizing support and interaction between special educators and classroom teachers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Self-reports and the critical incident interview technique, may limit the study, as researchers can never be sure regarding the degree that responses reflect true attitudes.

The questionnaire has been criticized because of the need for a high percentage of necessary participation of subjects.

Because participants may not want to be critical of the consultant/researcher, there may be a "halo" effect.

The consultant/researcher's involvement in the journal process may also have influenced results.

The sample population in this investigation is both small and specific, thereby reducing potential generalization.

METHOD

General Approach / Paradigm

This research utilized an exploratory, interactive, and teacher-focused approach, explained in three parts and involving a variety of different methods.

Parts I and II combined a survey with a critical incident interview. This phasing-in stage was primarily one of building a relationship, developing understanding, active listening, empathy and self-disclosure (Dustin, 1984). This stage is described as consultation "readiness" and can significantly influence the use and effectiveness of consultation (Cherniss, 1978; West & Idol, 1987).

Part III responded to the lack of qualitative research and to the need for phenomenological research (Heron & Kimball, 1988), rather than just researchers' opinions. Three teachers were solicited to participate voluntarily in implementing consultation as a special education service. This subgroup of the original research participants, along with the researcher, who was also the consultant, maintained consultation logs or journals. They also participated in taped, open-ended conversations or interviews.

Journals and conversations provided anecdotes and specific data on the outcomes of consultation efforts, allowing the researcher/consultant to document changes (Idol & West, 1987; West & Idol, 1987), and effective consultation, while justifying its use in professional practice (Dustin, 1984).

Implementation

Part I: Survey

In this descriptive, qualitative approach, survey research was used. Subsequent to district approval, a perceptions survey was orally reviewed, then completed by the targeted primary teachers.

The educators' perceptions regarding specific aspects of collaborative consultation was investigated. Teachers were

asked to describe what they mean by consultation and how it happens for them. They rated specific benefits and obstacles, as identified by the research review, using a survey form.

Part II: Interview

The Critical Incident Technique of interviewing was the selected method of instrumentation used in combination with the survey. With its flexible set of principles, it may be modified and adapted to suit specific situations. Researchers (Flanagan, 1954) have shown this technique to be a reliable and valid approach.

Teachers were asked to describe their experiences related to consultation. The data, or incidents, were then sorted by descriptive categories and summarized.

An incident, in this study, was defined as any event or experience a subject considered to be consultation, given the stated definition. An incident was considered critical, according to Flanagan (1954), if it made a 'significant' contribution, positively or negatively, to the general aim of the activity. The criterion for significance, in this study, was whether or not the event facilitated or hindered the teachers' work performance. There were no specifications regarding the currency of an incident.

Subsequent to a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the research, and a definition of consultation, the critical incident interview began with a request for a description of an event, or incident, of consultation. Details regarding the reasons for the incident, what actually happened, who was involved, and results were encouraged. There were no restrictions on the number of incidents each subject could describe. The result was a number of positive and negative incidents of consultation either facilitating or hindering the teachers' work performance, and influencing their personal or professional development.

Part III: Journal/Conversations

Logs or journals were kept by the consultant and the consultees for personal reflections on consultation and on this research project.

The practice of conducting conversations with participants is in itself a form of action which helps reform practice while facilitating thoughtful reflection (Carson, 1986). This practice was initiated throughout the implementation of consultation. Personal reflections played a major role influencing the overall tone of the questioning. Conversation probes focused on situation and incident descriptions; consultation action; feelings and thoughts; as well as evaluation or outcomes related to individuals, environment, and the consultation process. According to Weber (1986), the interview process must be "a conversation between the interviewer and participant that evokes the participant's lived experience, seeking shared understanding. Such meetings structure themselves in the talking, generating questions and possible interpretation for both people" (p.68).

Following analysis of conversations, the researcher focused on the insights given to consultation implementation, while raising still further questions for the next conversation. In this process the implementation practices being experienced by the participants were made available for reflection along with past experiences and future possibilities for improvements. Plogrove and McNeil (1989) emphasized the need for feedback in collaborative relationships. They paraphrased other researchers' definition of helpful feedback as the sharing of a description of how the person is reacting to the other person's behaviour, and advocated using constructive feedback to reduce anxiety in dealing with collaborative arrangements.

Research Participants

This research survey involved primary teachers in School District #49 (Central Coast), a small, isolated, rural school

district, where the researcher resided and taught. Special education services in District #49 were mostly of a pull-out nature, but each teacher had one to three special needs children integrated in the regular class on a part-time basis. The district was in its second year of implementation of the Primary Year 2000 program and was considering implementing consultation as a special education service.

The targeted population for the survey was the primary teachers within that district, approximately eight teachers. Four of the eight teachers participated in the other parts of the research.

The teaching experience of the subjects ranged from three to ten years of elementary level teaching. All teachers have had occasional experiences of informal consultation during the two years previous to this investigation.

Confidentiality of data was assured, and subjects were referred to by fictitious names in the data collection process. Permission to tape record all conversations was obtained, along with permission to interpret and rephrase written or recorded information.

Data Collection

Initial contact was made with the superintendent of the district, as well as the primary school principal, to describe the project, to solicit support and assistance, and to obtain permission. Refer to Appendix A for covering letter.

A letter of appreciation, as well as data results, will be sent to the staff involved and the district upon completion of the research.

Part I: Survey

The survey form, as shown in Appendix B, was orally reviewed by the researcher, then completed by the subjects. Follow-up was initiated, as necessary, to obtain the completed surveys from all personnel identified. It was anticipated that all survey forms would be completed and returned.

Survey results were sorted and compiled in several ways: a) comprehensive review of all surveys collectively, and b) grouping the responses into "meanings" categories, based on the descriptions of the meaning of consultation provided by the subjects.

Part II: Interview

The questions for the critical incident interview were piloted in a previous study. Questions were modified until the phrasing was considered to be appropriate.

Critical incident interviews were conducted with three of the primary teachers. Each interview was tape recorded, with participant permission.

The interview was directed towards concrete events, but incorporated subjects' perceptions and opinions. The questions used to elicit details of the incidents were:

1. "Think back to a time in your teaching career when you felt a special education teacher was involved with you in meeting the individual needs of a student".

2. "What were the general circumstances surrounding the incident?"

3. "Was the involvement helpful or hindering? In what way did the event facilitate or hinder your work performance?"

4. "How did you feel as a result of the incident?"

5. "What impact did this incident have on your personal or professional development?" Additional questions may be asked to solicit additional information, as deemed necessary. "What effect or changes did the incident have on your personal growth? Do you associate any changes in you or your teaching with the incident? Did the incident encourage or discourage any formal professional training (ie-workshop participation, courses)?"

This procedure continued until the subject had no further incidents to disclose.

Part III: Logs/Journals and Conversations

Journals were kept for six months (November-April). The conversations and journal entries were summarized, analyzed, and interpreted by the researcher. The interpretations were shared with the teachers to give them an opportunity to correct and modify the data.

Analysis**Part I: Survey**

Survey data analysis were analyzed to determine what teachers meant by consultation, as well as to collect individual and group perceptions of the benefits and obstacles of consultation.

Part II: Interview

The critical incident data were sorted by descriptive categories. The major themes, predominant topics and categories found in the data were examined for similarities and differences. Incidents that seemed similar were placed in groups, following Patton's (1980) inductive approach. Categories were resorted, redefined and clarified until clear groupings developed. Thus, a category was formed by the researcher as a result of people independently reporting the same kind of event. Incidents were then be placed under the major categories.

Analyzing the data consisted of placing incidents (in this case the perceptions and the impact) under categories until all behaviours of each participant were categorized. A definition and example, or a description for each of the categories is supplied. Each category was tabulated for each subject, and frequency distributions were collectively tabulated for all participants.

The frequency of reported perceptions and outcomes was calculated based on the total number of times that category was reported for each of the two sections of perceptions and impact. For example, if control over work was reported as a hinderance on six occasions out of all thirty-six reports

related to perceptions, it's frequency would be 16.6%, reflecting its rate of reported hinderance in relation to all reported perceptions.

Part III: Log/Journals

In analyzing phenomenological data, the researcher attempts to approach the data collection with a minimum of preconceived categories of what to look for (Borich & Nance, 1987).

The process of data analysis in this section followed guidelines established by Tesch (1987) and Van Manen (1984). Analysis began with an immersion in the data as a whole, using entire transcripts. Through the use of the "highlighting" and "line-by-line" approaches, the data were then divided into smaller parts by delineating meaning units or themes. "When highlighting, the researcher looks for statements in the text that are particularly revealing about the experience being described. When proceeding line by line, she considers each sentence and tries to discern what it means with regard to the phenomenon she is exploring" (Tesch, 1987, p.232). The rephrasing of themes was repeatedly refined. Common themes that were shared among the participants were explored.

The data from journals and conversations were reported as recommended by researchers (Lilly & Givens-Ogle, 1977; Reisberg & Wolf, 1986), in the form of descriptive episodes in the life of a program using quotations from individual participants, "slice of life" vignettes describing the natural reaction of participants to some aspect of the program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers have experienced many changes since collaborative consultation was proposed as a means to meet the needs of mainstreamed special students. The past few years have seen special education teachers moving from the self-contained class to the resource room, to an ever increasing role as consultant to the regular classroom teacher. These shifts in role and function have created many new and challenging demands on all teachers.

The role of the special educator is changing...the role has changed from that of a teacher in isolation to that of a member of an interdisciplinary team that plans, implements and reviews educational programs of handicapped pupils... the special educator must come out of that cozy, self-contained classroom. She must be able to elicit the cooperation of the team members...contact with the regular teacher are for the purposes of assisting, monitoring progress of pupils and providing training when needed, i.e., facilitating mainstreaming. (Peryon, 1987, p.31)

Researchers' theories about collaborative consultation are insufficient. The individual nature of the collaborative consultation process, and the importance of adaptive stages have been overlooked in the current research literature. Success of collaborative consultation is subject to the cooperation and attitudes of individuals involved, therefore practitioners' perspectives are necessary. Researchers have tried to define collaborative consultation, to identify characteristics, skills, obstacles and benefits, to list implementation procedures, to recommend which model to use, to determine success or failure based on student case objectives, and to recommend allocation of time. But no one has investigated how participating individuals perceive the process, or how the influences of collaborative consultation impact upon personal growth (West & Idol, 1987). Research needs to examine the impact of consultation to determine its merit as an integral part of the special educator's job.

"To date, the vast majority of literature in special education consultation could be categorized as being intended to justify and promote the role of the special educator as a consultant to classroom teachers of mainstreamed, exceptional students. Such studies have often taken the form of descriptions of the amount of time resource teachers spend in the consultation role, or what the role should be." (West & Idol, 1987)

The purpose of this research is to investigate teachers' personal meaning and experiencing of collaborative consultation in order to describe the personal relevance of the practice. This description is crucial to understanding, using, and evaluating the collaborative consultation process.

Practitioners' perspective and reflections should be an important component of the research base. None of the 65 current articles read regarding collaborative consultation revealed teachers' perspectives. Collecting the data necessary to retell teachers' experiences is part of the process, as is discussing and sharing ideas, reflecting, summarizing, and searching for commonalities. It leads to growth and development on all levels for one's self, colleagues, and clients.

Several questions were addressed in this investigation. What is it like to be part of a consultation effort? Does consultation have a positive impact on consultees and clients? What changes result from consultation? Did it work? Is there a significant difference in the consultant, consultee, client or the system? Teachers in this study described their perceptions of the outcome of their consultation experiences. Outcome is defined as (a) a change in skill or knowledge level of the consultee (b) a change in the client's behaviour, or (c) and improvement in the services or activities of the system.

In this study collaborative consultation facilitated, encouraged and ensured reflective teaching, a necessary practice. Reflection encouraged self and process examination

and growth, thereby increasing the potential for change. This closer examination revealed the individual nature of the process, as each teacher is seen at different stages in the adaptive process. During the initial stages of implementing collaborative consultation as a means of serving special needs students, attention must be focused on individuals' adaptation to change. The consultant, in the role of facilitator, must become aware of and attend to teachers' unique needs.

Survey Results and Discussion

All subjects described consultation as the discussion and planning which leads to effective individual needs' programs for special and regular students.

Eighty percent of the subjects rated the frequency of their participation in collaborative consultations as "often".

To some, collaborative consultation was considered effective since it provided ongoing assistance. It was felt that consultation would ensure that all participants are on the right track, understanding and keeping up to date with the targeted children. It would allow for joint reinforcement and evaluation. Teachers would be able to integrate new/target skills in planning lessons. Consultation would give the students more individual or small group attention.

Eighty percent of the surveyed participants ranked the following as benefits: increased communication, mutual understanding, materials sharing, increased flexibility, decreased referrals for special education, integration, assistance, and joint planning, implementation, evaluation.

Eighty percent of the participants ranked the following as obstacles: lack of resources, and special education funding restrictions. Sixty percent of the participants ranked the following as obstacles: time, work load, additional skills necessary, inadequate training programs, and the need for continuing professional development. It was emphasized by

participants that it takes a lot more time to plan together than separately.

Subsequent to the survey, interviews revealed participants' experiences and reflections. Information from the interviews showed that highly ranked benefits were decreased isolation and increased support, as well as the benefit of sharing ideas and reflection. These benefits are similar to the benefits identified by eighty percent of the survey participants.

During the survey, time was considered an obstacle by sixty percent of the subjects. Information from the interviews showed that the most highly ranked obstacle was time. This obstacle could be considered similar to the survey item, lack of resources, identified by eighty percent of the subjects as an obstacle.

Critical Incidents Interviews Data Analysis

Perceptions and Impact

The purpose of the critical incidents interview was to provide a clear descriptive account of teachers' perceptions of consultation, of helpful and hindering behaviours, and of the effect of collaborative consultation experiences.

This section of the investigation addressed the following issues as they relate to consultation as a special education service delivery model: What are teachers' perceptions of collaborative consultation? How have consultation experiences influenced personal, professional, and process development?

The categories used were derived from the participant interviews. Analyzing the data consisted of placing incidents (in this case the perceptions and the impact) under categories until all behaviours of each subject had been categorized.

The general circumstances surrounding the critical incidents varied. One situation Theresa discussed involved the need for a special individualized program in all areas for one student. She wanted a program designed that she could

easily monitor, and one the student could do successfully and independently.

One incident Valerie felt was critical involved trying to adapt lessons to a wider range of student abilities. A more open-ended style of teaching was needed for Valerie to involve special needs students more in her lessons.

Carol recounted incidents of needing assistance in teaching special students on a one to one skills development basis. Assistance in developing behaviour modification programs was also discussed.

The main categories of helpful and hindering experiences that teachers independently emphasized in this research were: meeting student needs, personal growth, emotional stress, and work/career advancement. Specific examples reported from the interviews are presented to illustrate the subjects' experiences of consultation.

1. Meeting Student Needs.

Situations in which the goal of meeting all student's needs are emphasized by the teacher.

Helpful (15.1%): Together we were better able to keep in sight what our goals are, and what's been accomplished, that we're going where we want to go. The consultant was like a liaison between other classrooms and my own class. It's more possible to team teach through the consultant as a liaison. Everyone feels the need for support in a new program, and the consultant provided that support. I'm getting a lot of new ideas. I wish I had more of this kind of help. I always felt lucky and appreciated the consultants' help. (Valerie)

With the consultants help I was able to teach more to individual differences, learning to work on individual programs while teaching the whole class. I had help getting my feet on the ground. It's great to have help for the needy kids. I have trouble figuring out what to do for some kids. The consultant has specialized training that I don't have.

It was great. I've seen growth in the kids since there's been two role models for them to look at, to experience two different aspects of teaching. With the consultant's help the kids realize there's more than one kind of teacher/style/model to learn from. (Theresa)

Having a consultant's assistance alleviated time constraints in the class, as well as large group problems. With these young kids it's nice to have another adult there to help. My special students got a lot of individual help, which helped me. (Carol)

Hindering (7.5%): I don't think I used the consultant's help as best as possible. Perhaps we could do more. (Valerie)

It felt like the flow of my lesson or unit was disrupted sometimes. Some students were distracted by someone else in the room. There are too many demands on teachers. (Theresa)

There was a feeling of stumbling at first. It doesn't work if the consultant doesn't understand my expectations or directions. I have had different ideas than the consultant about control in the class. And on occasion a child has received different styles of presentation, and been confused by the different information. The consultant and I weren't coordinated enough. (Carol)

2. Personal Growth.

Situations in which the teacher is personally influenced by the collaborative consultation experience.

Helpful (18.9%): The consultant helped create a risk free environment, which is crucial in learning to manage change - you have to bring people along with you, which requires trust and security. I was encouraged. I learned to work as a team more easily. Working together is better than alone. I felt a lot stronger, more confident, and inspired. The more we collaborate, the more we get! (Valerie)

Our energy together grows. I keep receiving new ideas. I became more aware of special needs and individual differences, as well as my own limitations. It's a growing

process. I could see my patience growing. I reevaluated what I was doing, changed my way of thinking and teaching somewhat. (Theresa)

Two heads are better than one. I felt more confident about my teaching. I felt braver. It's nice to talk to someone else, share ideas. I like getting a first hand view of another teacher's methods. (Carol)

Teachers spoke of feeling uplifted, encouraged and supported, with a sense of belonging to a team, when they had positive consultation experiences. Self-confidence was enhanced. One teacher developed an excited outlook towards change, taking chances, and trying alternatives. All participating teachers said they would risk participating in consultation again.

Hindering (3.8%): Feelings of frustration and distress, as well as feeling threatened were occasionally expressed by teachers who had negative consultation experiences. Feelings of lowered self esteem and decreased confidence were expressed.

I felt insecure and threatened at first. I wasn't used to having another teacher in the room. It didn't feel comfortable. (Theresa)

I'm a good teacher, but a strong person and once a consultant seemed very imposing. There was a negative atmosphere. I felt threatened by that person. (Carol)

3. Emotional Stress.

Situations in which the work-related emotional needs of the teachers are foremost.

Helpful (13.2%): The whole school had a more unified atmosphere. It was like we were a team working together in a joint effort. The work was shared and was less isolating. I think we improved our communication. I was reassured that I was doing the best job possible, which was encouraging and uplifting. (Valerie) It was great to have someone to "bounce ideas off". Having time to discuss what's

been done is creating a less stressful job. We're able to talk about specific things that are needing more attention. Our brainstorming sessions made my teaching better planned, with more forethought. (Theresa)

I increased my tolerance and patience. I needed that reassurance that my expectations for special students were realistic. (Carol)

Hindering (3.8%): Having special needs children in a class of 25 children is extremely difficult. It was just too demanding at times and having a special teacher telling me to do more work was infuriating. At first the changes were overwhelming. (Theresa)

There just isn't enough time for all the talking that's needed. There are already too many things going on. Reflection demands a lot of time - and there is never enough. (Valerie)

Having a full day already, finding time for extra consulting was more demanding. I was not able to deal with it all. It caused more stress because I didn't want to deal with it at the time, but I had to. (Carol)

4. Work/Career Advancement.

Situations where the professional development, advancement of teaching practice, and educational needs (i.e., adequate in-service, and continuing education) of the teachers are the issue.

Helpful (15.1%): I learned first hand how another teacher worked with my students. A lot of practical aspects of my teaching improved as I implemented some new ideas recommended and demonstrated by the consultant. (Carol)

I am continuously questioning - and sometimes I feel positive - sometimes I'm unsure - but questioning together is a part of growing. I look forward to the next time I can work in this style. Everyone helped each other learn new styles and methods of teaching. Special students seemed to benefit so much with my improved teaching. (Valerie)

I look towards overall needs more now, not just the intellectual. I realize how much I have to learn and it never ends. It was like I was a student again. I felt that certain points about my teaching and about special students were made aware to me. I made notes of these points and whenever I was able to take part in related workshops or conferences, I tried to focus on those areas and get more information. (Theresa)

When the teachers felt incidents of consultation were helpful, they spoke of feeling an increase in a team effort to overcome obstacles. They were excited about the positive school atmosphere. Teachers were more willing to take chances and try alternatives. They spoke of advancing their careers, feeling increased confidence and self-esteem. One teacher took special education courses. Another spoke of giving joint in-service workshops to other staff members. More effort and motivation were reported, along with increased feelings of support. The idea of modifying one's opinion and searching for alternatives was expressed. Teachers wanted to do more, work harder, and were keen to help each other.

Hindering (5.7%): Consultants should have to teach regular classes with 25 - 30 children before they are qualified to give us advice. Some of the ideas suggested just aren't practical in a regular class. They aren't trained to accommodate 30 kids in their recommendations.

I was made aware of the lack of experience of one consultant. I became more set in my ways and tried to prove my teaching was best. I guess that kept me from learning because I was angry about her lack of experience and lack of real understanding and cooperativeness. (Theresa)

Each teacher has their own way of teaching and differences of opinions can come out.

The demand for time to meet with the consultant was too much. (Carol)

When the teachers had experiences of consultation that hindered their work performance, they spoke of feelings of

excessive demands of time and attention. Their responsibilities to other students were restricted. The incident was described as distracting and disturbing to other students. Theory was not easily applied to practice. Frustration, lowered self-esteem and a loss of motivation were the feelings expressed.

Summary.

The results of the teachers' perceptions and the impact of consultation on the subject's development are presented in Table 1. The frequency of reported perceptions and outcomes are calculated based on all of the data points reported. For example, meeting student needs was reported as helpful incidents on 8 occasions out of all 53 reports. Its frequency is, therefore, 15.1%, reflecting its rate of reported helpfulness in relation to all reported incidents.

INTERVIEWS DATA ANALYSIS TABLE 1
Proportion (%) of Perceptions and
Outcomes of Consultation Incidents

	Helpful Incidents	%Hindering Incidents	Percentage of Incidents Reported
Meeting Students Needs	15.1%	7.5%	22.6%
Personal Growth	18.9%	3.8%	22.7%
Emotional Stress	15.2%	5.7%	20.9%
Work/Career Advancement	15.1%	5.7%	20.8%
Other	9.3%	3.8%	13.1%

Comparing the findings of this research with the literature reviewed, it can be seen that when consultation

experiences were helpful, the teachers cited effects similar to the major benefits identified. When experiences were considered hindering the teachers cited effects similar to the obstacles identified in the literature.

The personal and professional development of the teachers was significantly influenced by the consultation process. Positive consultation incidents were essential to keep teachers functioning effectively and with enthusiasm for the task of integration of special needs children.

When teachers considered consultation experiences hindering, they expressed a lack of professional development, emotional distress, feelings of low morale and a lack of motivation.

Attitudes and experiences of teachers need to be considered and utilized in encouraging personal and professional development.

Adaptation and Individual's Experiences

Conversations and journal entries with participating teachers revealed several predominant themes. These themes emphasized the developmental aspect of people trying to adapt to changes initiated by collaborative consultation. Teachers in this study all shared very similar concerns and feelings, representing some of the identified phases of adaptation. It is this very human element of collaborative consultation and how people adapt to change that has been overlooked in the current research. Individuals' styles and stages of adapting need to be attended to, being key elements in the implementation of collaborative consultation, to which people are struggling to adapt. It all comes down to individuals trying to work together, trying to assist each other throughout a difficult process of adapting to changes. It's a continuous process that has no end. Individuals' needs are unique and change throughout their development and their stages in the adaptation process. The consultant's initial role is one of assisting teachers in adapting to changes,

catering to their individual needs, and guiding them through the process. My role as researcher was to capture the essence of these experiences.

In the following sections common themes of adapting to change and professional development will be examined first. Next, key elements of individuals' experiences will be retold. Common predominant themes among individuals and their relationship will then be explained.

"Knowledge of change, resistance to it and how to effect change, is important to special educators. Mainstreaming exceptional children requires the willingness of many individuals to make changes. The special educator who is knowledgeable of change will be effective." (Peryon, 1987, p.34)

In order to effectively perform a new and complex role, the consultant needs an awareness of the regular teachers' professional development status, and current stage in the process of adult development.

"It is helpful for the resource teacher to bear in mind these stages of career development when relating of teachers. More can be accomplished when the special educator is able to respond to the general needs of teachers while working for the benefit of children." (Peryon, 1987, p.34)

A major point in understanding transitions is that regardless of the reason for the change, it will trigger a cycle of reactions and feelings that is predicable.

"Overall the seven transition phases represent a cycle of experiencing a disruption, gradually acknowledging its reality, testing oneself, understanding oneself, and incorporating changes in one's behaviour. The level of ones' self-esteem varies across these phases and appears to follow a predictable path. Identifying the seven phases along such a self-esteem curve often gives one a better understanding of the nature of the transition cycle". (Peryon, 1987, p.12)

Seldom, if ever, does a person move neatly from phase to phase. These representations are of the general experience and any individual's progressions and regressions are unique

to his or her unique circumstances. For example, a person may never get beyond denial or minimisation. Another may give up during depression. What needs to be emphasized is the potential for growth arising from any change.

Valerie's Experiences.

For Valerie, to be part of a collaborative consultation effort is to feel supported, throughout the process of change. Sharing ideas helped Valerie adjust to change. She felt more connected, bonded to other classrooms, through the "liaison" of the consultant. "Everyone working together is better than working in isolation." Team teaching became more possible. "The energy together grows!" Valerie likes to have someone to "bounce ideas off of". New ground was broken as new ideas were developed and shared between Valerie and the consultant. Valerie needed help starting original ideas, needing input and alternative ideas presented. She was then better able to adapt them to her own style and students. "Everyone feels the need for support with the new program. It's easier for me to make changes if I feel I'm supported. It's easier if I have someone to ask questions. I don't think it's good to work in isolation." Valerie emphasized the need for security and reassurance within a risk free environment, where teachers or students are able to make errors. Trust and security were critical elements. "In order to manage change and bring people along with you, a safe environment is necessary."

Awareness developed as individual differences and needs were increasingly accommodated. The consultant helped with special students, diagnosing and working directly with the students. Valerie's concerns have been the extremes of the students (the upper and lower performers), so broad, open activities were needed. "Working in a collaborative style with the consultant helped in developing the necessary open ended lessons."

This process of change is, at times, difficult and demanding. Change is developmental. Teachers are always

trying new approaches and methods in an effort to meet student needs. Although it may seem overwhelming initially, one needs to move slowly in small steps. It can be a very slow, growing process. Doubts will diminish with positive experiences, as in most adaptation cycles.

Valerie felt she was continuously questioning. "Sometimes I feel positive, sometimes I'm always questioning, asking what's our goal. At first the changes felt overwhelming." Valerie initially tried to focus on the special needs students, but she is now trying to focus on whole class open ended lessons. "Initially there were many doubts and uncertainties about integration, but it's slowly becoming more manageable. With the consultants' help I am developing more open ended activities to meet everyone's needs." Valerie needed to keep reminding herself not to become too discouraged, to keep in sight what's been accomplished, what the goals are, and that she is going where she wants to go with her students.

Time for reflecting is necessary, beneficial, and lacking. For Valerie the more she collaborated, the more she got. "Two heads are better than one". Valerie always felt very luck and appreciative of the consultants' help. Yet time was not readily available to talk together. Valerie wrote reflective comments daily regarding what works with the students and what doesn't work. "Any opportunity to share reflections was extremely useful, but there was never enough time."

Theresa's Experiences

For Theresa, to be part of a collaborative consultation effort, within the framework of the Year 2000, is to experience an increased accommodation of students' individual differences and needs. Students were able to "fit in" more with the regular class. Theresa had to spend less time finding special individual materials. One to one instruction was provided, when necessary, with the help of the consultant.

Extra instruction beyond what was available within the classroom was provided. Theresa felt she was learning to work on individual programs while teaching the whole class, teaching to individual differences. "The consultant assisted in developing special education programs for identified students, a task which involved specialized training." The provision of a different approach was appreciated. "Two heads are better than one". Change was encouraged with support and a risk taking environment. Theresa felt free to seek help and try different things. She was open to suggestions.

"Cooperation and assistance led to the development of students' social skills." Theresa was supported when she needed to "get her feet on the ground with other students at the beginning of the year." She relied on the consultant as a "sounding board". "It soon became apparent that social problems between the students were worked out more, and conflict resolution increased. Students were taught to acknowledge individual differences and develop their tolerance and acceptance."

Theresa's personal growth was acknowledged by reflections about gaining new perspectives, taking risks, and being open/receptive to new ideas.

Increased awareness, even when realizing one's own limitations, exemplifies self development. Theresa acknowledged becoming more aware of special needs students and individual differences. With that awareness came the realization of her own limitations in her training, as well as the initiative to study special education more. A clearer perspective of herself developed. "It's a growing experience." Theresa began to reevaluate what she was doing, and changed from trying to get students all "caught up" to looking at the overall child more. Her way of thinking changed along with her teaching method. Theresa also learned to increased her tolerance and patience, areas of her own acknowledged weaknesses.

Just as Theresa "grew", so did the relationship with the consultant, and the process of collaboration. Theresa discovered her preference for a "partner" role rather than a "director" in the collaboration effort.

While Theresa and the consultation process were developing, inspiration as well as difficulties were felt. Initially there was a feeling of "stumbling". Theresa felt there were "too many demands on the teacher, with noise, disruptions and interruptions, especially from the special needs students. Different expectations were needed for some students."

Decreasing isolation along with an increase in assistance, support, and new ideas facilitated adaptation and growth for Theresa. Being able to bounce ideas and reflect with another teacher encouraged change, objectivity, and a different perspective.

Carol's Experiences

For Carol, to be part of a collaborative consultation effort is to feel reassured while developing a clearer vision. She needed reassurance that her expectations for special needs students were realistic. With the consultants' help, progress was more clearly seen. The collaboration facilitated growth for her students as well as herself. "It was helpful to observe the students as they worked with another teacher." Both Carol and the consultant learned from each other.

Individual differences and needs were met, and "an eager learning attitude developed." Collaborative consultation alleviated some time constraints and large group problems for Carol. It was nice as well as helpful for Carol to talk to someone else and share ideas. "Students learned from each other and were eager to help one another. They became more independent and keen to move on."

Carol prefers to work in a "director's" role, maintaining responsibility for students' lessons. She wanted to oversee

programs and direct the assistance. Carol expressed a need for control.

The only real difficulty experienced was related to insufficient time for meeting. "There just isn't enough time, but we tried to reflect weekly. There is no time for more meetings. There are too many things going on." There was never enough time to discuss students as much as desired. Clear communication was something Carol tried to practice, as she realized the assistance wouldn't work if the consultant didn't understand her directions or expectations. Carol also wondered whether we were communicating clearly with the students and their parents.

Carol emphasized that decreased isolation along with increased support facilitates adaptation and growth. "Time for reflection and discussion was insufficient." Reflection and sharing ideas increased her perspective, while doubts decreased with positive experiences.

Personal Experiences As A Consultant and Researcher

As the consultant and researcher I was continually hoping and searching for ways to meet everyone's needs - students' as well as teachers'. This new role involving exceptionally high expectations was difficult. Reflections were very helpful and facilitated growth and change. Throughout the process feelings of doubt arose. The major problem was insufficient time to meet with teachers, reducing the potential for sharing and reflecting, thereby limiting the effects of the collaborative consultation effort.

Search To Meet All Needs

A teachers' job is one of unrealistically high expectations. To be able to meet the needs of 25-30 students is not an attainable goal, yet it is one teachers share. My job as a collaborative consultant is to help teachers to attain that goal, with a focus on serving special needs' students. I need to cater to individual teachers' needs as

they relate to special needs' students. The search to find ways to meet those needs never ends, nor does the hope.

Difficulties

The consultant's role is a difficult one. The task of developing rapport and skill in working with individual teachers as well as students seemed overwhelming initially. Working in isolation is easier, and less time consuming. I felt I struggled a great deal in the beginning of this endeavour.

Being a researcher was also very difficult. I had trouble guiding discussions and had doubts about the process. At times I questioned the significance of what I was trying to find out. At first it was a very frustrating time, but it soon grew into a learning and rewarding experience.

Reflections

Re: Collaborative Consultation - The effectiveness of the collaborative consultation effort is greatly influenced by the amount of time spent reflecting, individually and collaboratively.

Reflective teaching is an advocated practice, a valuable exercise, and a good tool to use for future planning and learning. Reflection is an emphasized learning strategy for students. Just as we need to direct students to practice reflective learning, we need to direct ourselves to practice reflective teaching on a regular basis. Many teaching ideas and problem solving plans evolved from reflection. I was able to be more objective and realize what was or wasn't working in my lessons, and thereby make the necessary changes. I need to work with staff more closely and initiate reflection.

As time passed I began to feel better. As my feelings about consultation changed, that change made a difference in the kinds of activities I encouraged with kids in the classroom. There was a lot of involvement, challenge and reflecting. As I realized my direction better I felt a surge of energy. I became more positive, excited and took more

risks. I felt keen to learn, wanting to develop better lessons and practice sessions for teachers. Whenever we were able to talk and plan together we learned from each other, sharing ideas, information, and methods. Our students and classrooms felt the benefits of our sharing relationship, just as we did individually. I began to think we were moving on the right track. I felt positive, supported growth.

Re: Research - My reflections regarding the research project led me to ask more questions. As some important elements of the research appeared I wondered how the current literature had dealt with those elements. I began to relate the literature with what I was dealing with in the practical research setting. The act of reflection has received little attention in the collaborative consultation literature. Yet reflection is a necessary key component of the process, being an important step in the development of the consultation process as well as in the development of one's self. Collaborative consultation means working very closely with individuals' needs, addressing teachers' unique phases in their own process of adapting. There can be no set formula for collaborative consultation as many research articles profess. The process of adapting to collaborative consultation is unique to each individual. Research has been lacking individuality. It's only when ideas and insights are communicated that they become trustworthy and operational. Change is a process that requires reflective practices for teachers and students.

Growth and Change

As my role as a consultant developed I noticed many changes, along with personal and professional growth. Although initial feelings were of frustration, doubt, and a loss of control I soon began to investigate and model more open-ended instruction, in an effort to meet all student needs. Along with initial feelings of a loss of control came emotional stress and job dissatisfaction. At times I felt

that I was no longer really teaching, that I wasn't challenging myself enough. At one point I even considered a job change or transfer to a regular class teaching assignment. Introspection helped me to realize that I needed to move the job in a direction more suited for myself and the individuals with whom I was trying to work. I had to look more closely at myself, my expectations, what I felt my job should involve, and how I could work towards developing some changes. I tried to practice new strategies, continuously searching for better ways of teaching. As I recognized the need for different goals and ways of serving teachers' needs I began to make changes in myself and the consultative process. My job became one of encouraging and facilitating reflective attitudes. I needed to initiate introspection and communication, as well as application of our ideas. We began to pull together more and begin to try some new ideas. As new strategies were successful an enjoyable, exciting energy emerged. I felt valuable and my direction became a little clearer. Soon the positive effects of collaborative consultation became known to other staff members, and the efforts spread. When other teachers heard about collaborative activities they too wanted assistance in similar ways. The process was a growing and learning experience for all. I think we're on the right track. It feels positive, challenging, and supportive.

Doubts

Initially I felt very unsure of the type of assistance teachers needed. Although my new contact with more "regular" students was enjoyable, I needed to develop different skills and methods to make lessons more "open-ended". A clear understanding of how to serve both student and teacher needs was lacking. Sometimes, just as I thought my job was becoming more defined, I'd realize that there wouldn't be any one way of being a consultant, as each teacher has different needs. At first I thought I needed to direct the teachers, encourage them to look more closely at certain things, or to guide their

reflections, but my opinion changed. I decided that I should not be a "director", but rather, a facilitator. To direct would mean assuming a superior role, and in a collaborative effort all of us needed to discuss and direct the learning.

I questioned the validity of how we were measuring or determining the effectiveness of consultation, or of student growth.

Sometimes I felt very limited in what I had to offer. Self doubts reappeared throughout the year. With some teachers I felt inexperienced. I felt insecure and inadequate at times, but tried to remind myself that collaborative consultation meant that we pooled ourselves as resources. That feeling of sharing the burden of striving to meet all students' needs alleviated some of the self doubts. Together we could do it!

As a researcher I often had doubts about where my data was going. I wasn't sure where my ideas were leading me. I was unsure how to get at the heart of the developmental process of collaborative consultation. I wondered just what it was I was trying to investigate. My "lived experience" at time was just frustration. Sometimes all I was investigating and learning seemed insignificant to anyone other than those individuals involved in the project. Collaborative consultation often became an integration issue.

Time

The major problem experienced throughout this project was the lack of time available to consult with the teachers. The time for reflection and planning with others was limited. Many consultations were done "on the run" in a informal way during coffee or lunch breaks. Various committee meetings seemed to take up too much of teachers' after school time. I felt extremely frustrated by the lack of time and unable to find any solutions. The effect of the collaborative consultation effort is directly related to the amount of time spent together. Time has to be made available if consultation

is to be effective. Time for reflection is a necessary tool for planning, evaluation and assessment of the students, as well as the teachers, and for the consultation process.

Common Threads and Adaptation

Woven throughout individuals' stories are common predominant themes: searching and hoping, the slow and difficult process, time restraints, doubts, reflection, support and reassurance. Some themes represent different phases of adaptation and developmental levels. These experiences and themes have not yet been investigated by collaboration research.

Searching and Hoping

The teachers all explained that to be a teacher working in a collaborative consultation style of special needs students is to be searching and hoping for ways to meet all students' needs. Striving for the ideal, in this case, ways to teach all students to strive for their maximum potential, is mankind's history. It is the driving force behind improvement, self-development, and progress. Although it is acknowledged that this goal sets extremely high expectations, teachers are continuously searching. It is the search, the hope, that make teaching both fulfilling and challenging at the same time.

Striving for the ideal is setting yourself up for disappointment, stress, anxiety, and failure, because the expectation is beyond one's capability in realistic human terms. No teacher has yet been able to meet the needs of all students all of the time. So we have to settle for less than the ideal, but continue searching and striving for better ways.

With collaborative consultation comes the hope that those ideals will be realized. The solution to the dilemmas of dual education systems for special and regular students has been presented in the form of collaborative consultation. This proposed solution adds fuel to the fire of hope that teachers

burn. Hope that the search for the ideal is over. Collaborative consultation is in itself the result of years of searching and hoping for ways to best serve the needs of special students.

A Slow and Difficult Process

"...generally people dislike change. There is comfort in the familiar, even though it may not be effective. Comfort is security. Change upsets the equilibrium. Generally it is not accepted as an adventure or a challenge." (Peryon, 1987, p.33)

Change is often referred to as an emotional roller coaster ride. Change is a struggle, but struggle equals growth. Everything doesn't go easily and things may not be successful the first time you try time. But if you want to grow, you have to go through some growing pains. When you decide to change, you automatically become vulnerable because suddenly you're taking risks. Once you do that, there's always the chance you'll fail.

As the search to meet all students' needs develops, changes occur. Adjusting to the changes initiated by collaborative consultation is a slow and difficult process. Accepting that we must continue to search, hope and strive for an unattainable ideal is difficult.

Teachers are continuously questioning and analyzing goals, lessons, results, and themselves. Trying to do so in the context of collaborative consultation is twice as difficult initially. Although two heads may eventually be better than one, initially it is an overwhelming task to try to collaborate in so many ways, for so many students' needs. Change takes time and patience.

"I feel so much more stimulated and creative. It's hard work, but it's exciting" (Valerie).

Doubts

To teach is to have doubts, as well as expectations. Although working positively with a consultant may decrease the doubts, many remain.

In most incidents of adaptation doubt is experienced, and worked through as a phase of the adjustment period. Doubt is a common feeling expressed throughout most of the seven phases within the cycle of adapting to change.

Reflection

Reflective teaching is acknowledged in literature and emphasized by the teachers in this study as being the ideal practice. Reflections are two-fold: they act as a mirror reflecting and validating good things seen, and they act as a window suggesting where one is going and how to improve. Much is to be gained by looking back at lessons, interactions, and goals with a critical and analytical perspective. Future plans are better developed when based on reflections. Reflection helps us to take charge of our thoughts, decisions and actions, to examine them and so be able to direct them. We need to first look deeply within ourselves in order to truly see another human being. Reflecting on our own story with the support of a caring other is a powerful life-enhancing tool. Sharing stories tells us and others what we value, while revealing our differences as well. As we come to listen to and understand others, we can come to accept and appreciate our individualities.

In the process of adapting to changes, reflection is an important factor. Often in the initial phase of adapting, a person reflects on things as they were before the changes began, looking back at the way things used to be.

Despite this knowledge about the benefits of reflection, participants in this survey perceived time to reflect collaboratively to be a major obstacle to collaborative consultation. Teacher interviews, conversations, and journal entries revealed major concerns about the lack of time available for collaborating.

Despite teachers' limited time for collaborative reflection, many benefits were acknowledged.

"I've gained a lot of confidence in myself and what I know about children" (Carol).

"I needed to go through my own struggle. The struggle is a necessary part of getting started" (Theresa).

"When you start making big changes in the way you do business, it hits you personally. There's never enough time, the process is slow, and building consensus is a pain, but the process of change can be enormously good for teachers" (Valerie).

Support and Reassurance

Support, security and reassurance facilitate adaptation and growth. Teachers need to be included in changes, and feel comfortable with them. There has to be an atmosphere of freedom - freedom to try new things.

**"...Changes that are successful are those which participants view as interesting, incorporating their needs and values, reducing their work and protecting their security...all parties be involved in determining problems and all parties receive support and encouragement. It is also important that communication be open and procedures kept flexible so that revisions can be made easily."
(Peryon, 1987, p.33)**

Change can seem overwhelming at first. Teachers need to feel some success from the start. "Small changes need to be tried initially" (Carol). It helps to have a colleague to talk to as discussions lead to broader views" (Valerie). Teaching is like a well; there has to be a renewal source or the water won't be any good.

Summary

The Year 2000 and collaborative consultation force changes on both personal and career levels. The perceptions, experiences, and common themes disclosed by participants of this study parallel the individuals' stages of personal and career development. The reflective component of collaborative consultation acted as mirrors to facilitate viewing oneself, and as windows to look ahead through.

Adult development is an on-going process of growth through several phases. All subjects in this study are in the middle-age group (age 36 - 45) which is categorized as a time "of upheaval similar to teens. One is again re-evaluating one's personal life and desiring change, growth or renewal" (p.32, Peryon, 1987). This stage of upheaval and the need for growth is strongly influenced and affected by the changes initiated by the Year 2000 and collaborative consultation.

While special students become more integrated, teachers strive to meet individuals' needs. Searching and hoping for improved teaching is acknowledged as a slow and difficult process, demanding time for reflection. It is a time of change, filled with doubts, emotional stress and the need for support, encouragement, reassurance and recognition. It is also a time of growth on personal and professional levels. New growth is both the result as well as the cause of an increased search to meet all needs. The process of growth and adapting to change, as experienced by the participants, is influenced by the subjects' personal stages of development. It reflects career levels, with some teachers needing support, encouragement and recognition, others moving towards recognition of competence, and some needing or being pushed towards new growth.

Subjects described changes of feelings similar to Peryon's seven phases of adapting to change; immobilization, depression, letting go, testing, searching and internalization. While Carol seemed to maintain a desire to be recognized as competent, Valerie and Theresa emphasized, needing support and encouragement along with the new growth. As the consultant I began with feelings of new growth, but soon needed support, encouragement, and recognition of competence.

RESEARCH REFLECTIONS

Reading, reflecting, writing and re-writing about collaborative consultation has been a true education for me. It has empowered me to name a world I work in, and to look at others' perspectives. I have become more than what I was, on personal and professional levels.

The experience was not easy. There were many times I questioned if I would ever complete the project, and if I was developing an understanding of the research questions. I haven't found answers or final solutions, but I have developed an openness to meaning and to more questions. I struggle to keep possibilities open and the way I understand my research question continues to evolve.

The experience of truly listening to my participants in the project has deepened my respect, while expanding my own development and professionalism. Through this research I have become more attuned to others, and also more aware that we are so beautifully unique yet joined.

SUMMARY

The literature reviewed indicated a recent increase in attention to consultation as a special education service of providing support to regular education teachers (Reisberg & Wolf, 1986). The call for a change in the structure of schools has been emphasized, with consultation being proposed as a solution to problems identified with a dual system of education with separate regular and special services (Reisberg & Wolf, 1986; West & Cannon, 1988). It was concluded that schools cannot improve without people working together (Lieberman, 1986). Many researchers have not, however, investigated practitioners' perceptions, attitudes, or experiences, but have focused instead on their own opinions.

This investigation remediates a deficit in practical research. It addresses concerns regarding teachers' definitions, attitudes and perceptions of consultation, which are important areas for consideration in the implementation of consultation. How experiences influenced the development of the individuals involved, as well as the consultation process, were investigated. This field-evaluation has been instructive in determining elements important to actual implementation of collaborative consultation. The information provided by the personnel of one school provided valuable assistance in developing an effective consultation service delivery model best suited to meet the needs of the individuals involved.

"Implementation of a model rarely proceeds in a pure fashion; that is one of the ongoing difficulties in relating research to practice. One must be attentive to practice, to the context in which an idea or model is being implemented, and to the conditions in which professionals work and are socialized. All these represent key features to consider in implementing any practice." (Pugach & Johnson, 1989, p.233)

Does consultation work? That is, as consultation progresses through its stages, or is completed, is there "a significant difference in the consultant, the consultee, the

client, or the system or organization?" (p.22, Heron & Kimball, 1988). The success of consultation is subject to the cooperation and attitudes of individuals involved (Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler & Strain, 1988). This investigation indicated that consultation resulted in significant differences in participants, clients, and the process. The research examined the impact of consultation, and verified its merit as an integral part of the special educator's job. This field-evaluation has contributed valuable insight and information in a comprehensive, practical application of research in the area of collaborative consultation.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this research influence collaborative consultation practices, and further research.

Implications for Collaborative Consultation

Collaborative consultation is a process as individual and unique as the personnel involved. It is a process that continuously evolves, in direct relationship to the amount of time and effort allotted to it.

The implementation of collaborative consultation, within the context of the Year 2000 in British Columbia, and as a means of providing service to special needs students integrated in regular education programs, is a process of adapting to changes, on professional and personal levels. Individuals' perceptions, attitudes and experiences related to consultation influence the success of collaborative consultation. Teachers' phase levels in adapting to changes and career phases influence the consultation process. Practitioners' experiences need to be revealed, as collecting the data necessary to retell their stories is part of the process, as is discussing and sharing ideas, reflecting, summarizing and searching for commonalities. The process of collaborative consultation is improved by building on the strengths and weaknesses of previous experiences. Reflection is a key element of collaborative consultation, encouraging self and process examination and growth, thereby increasing the potential for change.

Implications for Further Research

Researchers' efforts to define collaborative consultation, to identify characteristics, skills, obstacles and benefits, to list implementation procedures, to recommend which model to use, to determine success or failure based on student case objectives, and to recommend time allocation have been theoretically valuable. However, practitioners' perspectives are lacking in the research base, and are an important part in the implementation of collaborative

consultation. In order to reduce the demands of merging special and regular education services, and to facilitate mutual professional growth, documentation of consultation experiences is necessary. Teachers and researchers will need to unite in practising collaborative consultation in order to improve communication, understanding, and the consultation process.

Time allocations necessary for professional implementation of collaborative consultation is extensive. Time is needed for discussing and reflecting, as well as adapting to changes.

Limitations

Self-reports, such as the survey used, as well as the critical incident interview technique, may limit the study, as researchers can never be sure regarding the degree that responses reflect true attitudes. The consultant/researcher's personal and professional involvement with the subjects may have influenced the results. The sample population in this investigation is both small and specific, thereby reducing the potential generalizability. Further research with different population sizes, in different situations is needed.

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Appendix A

Box 251,
Hagensborg, B.C.,
VOT 1H0

June 7, 1991

Superintendent,
School District #49,
Box 5,
Hagensborg, B.C.,
VOT IHO.

Dear Mr. Robinson,

As part of my M.A. program I have developed a research proposal to explore collaborative consultation as a special education service. The purpose of this study is to remediate the deficit of practical research related to consultation by examining teachers' opinions and experiences. Definitions, service descriptions, perceptions, benefits and barriers, as well as personal, professional and process development will be investigated from practitioners' perspectives. It is anticipated that this research will serve as a beginning stage in the process of implementing consultation on a school-wide basis, promoting changes in education practice, teaching and teachers.

Several research questions are to be investigated. What do teachers mean by "consultation", and how is it practised? What are teachers' perceptions of the benefits and obstacles of collaborative consultation? How have consultation experiences influenced teachers' subsequent personal or professional development? What is the lived experience of consultation?

The targeted population for this research, subsequent to the principals' permission, will be the primary teachers at Bella Coola Elementary School, in School District #49. Personnel will be contacted, individually and in a group, on numerous occasions throughout the research period from Sept. 1991 to July 1992. The researcher is the consultant at the targeted school, and will also be providing data for some parts of the project.

Confidentiality of data will be assured, and subjects will be referred to by fictitious names in the data collection process. Permission to tape record all conversations will be

obtained, along with permission to interpret and rephrase written or recorded information.

The expected starting date of this research is Sept. 1991. The expected date of completion of data collection in the school is Dec. 1991. The anticipated date of the final report is July, 1992. A formal written report of the outcomes will be forwarded to the school district upon completion.

This research will utilize an exploratory, interactive, and teacher-focused approach, consisting of four parts and involving a variety of different methods.

In part I, a survey form using Likert-type scales of measurement will be completed by the subjects during an interview with the researcher/consultant. Teachers will be asked to describe what they mean by consultation and how it happens for them. They will rate specific benefits and obstacles, as identified by the research reviewed from 1980 to 1990, using the attached survey form.

The second part of this research is a phasing-in stage, being one of building a relationship, developing understanding, active listening, empathy, and self-disclosure. This "readiness" stage will involve the critical incident technique of interviewing, where teachers will be asked to describe their experiences related to consultation. A description of an incident of consultation, along with details regarding the reasons, actual events, persons involved, and results will be encouraged. The result will be a number of positive and negative incidents of consultation either facilitating or hindering the teachers' work performance, and influencing their personal or professional development. The attached questions will be used to elicit details of the incidents.

Part III will involve one or two teachers who voluntarily participate in implementing consultation as a special education service for integrated students. This subgroup of research participants, along with the researcher/consultant, will maintain consultation logs or journals for personal reflections. They will also participate in taped, open-ended conversations or interviews. Conversation probes will focus on situation and incident descriptions, consultation action, feelings and thoughts, as well as evaluation or outcomes related to individuals, the environment, and the consultation process.

In part IV, differences in teachers' perceptions subsequent to consultation experiences will be investigated using the original survey used in part I.

This research proposes to explore teachers' definitions, attitudes and perceptions of consultation, which are important areas for consideration prior to the implementation of consultation as a special education service. How experiences have influenced the development of the individuals involved, as well as the consultation process, will be investigated. The information provided by the personnel of the Bella Coola Elementary School, in School District #49, will be of invaluable assistance in developing an effective consultation service best suited to meet the needs of the individuals involved. This proposal has the potential to contribute valuable insight and information in a comprehensive, practical application of research in the area of consultation.

This letter, containing all of the necessary information, is written in lieu of a formal research request form. I will gladly supply any additional information desired. Please forward a letter of District approval for this research, as such evidence is a necessary prerequisite to University approval.

Your support and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Correspondence should be forwarded to my supervisor:

Dr. R. Tinney,
Director of Professional Studies,
Box 1700,
Victoria, B.C.,
V8W 2Y2.

I/We certify the above
information to be correct
and agree to the
conditions set by the
school district.

Signature of Researcher

Signature of Supervisor

Appendix B

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CONSULTATION
SURVEY FORM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Name _____

Teaching Experience (years) _____

Current Teaching Level/Grade _____

Describe what "consultation" means to you. _____

How frequently have you had experiences that you would consider as representative of "collaborative consultation", using the provided definition? Please check one rating, and provide any additional information.

- never.....
- rarely.....
- often.....
- consistently.....

Do you think consultation is an effective method of providing services to integrated special needs students? In what ways? Please provide examples, as well as evidence of any gains.

TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE CONSULTATION

Do you perceive the following items to be possible benefits of collaborative consultation?

Items:	No	Yes
economicsavings.....		
improvedcommunication.....		
mutualunderstanding.....		
materialssharing.....		
greaterflexibility.....		
reduced referrals for special education.....		
improved practical aspects of teaching.....		
promotes integration of "special" students.....		
provides assistance to regular teachers.....		
sharedresponsibility.....		
joint planning, implementing, evaluating.....		
prevent learning and behaviour problems.....		
coordination of instructional programs.....		
increased job satisfaction.....		
reducedstress/burnout.....		
Other perceived benefits? _____		

TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF OBSTACLES TO COLLABORATIVE CONSULTATION

Do you think the following items will be obstacles to collaborative consultation?

Items:	No	Yes
lack of resources.....		
cooperation from others.....		
timeconstraints.....		
lack of consideration for multiple responsibility.....		
workload.....		
additional skill necessary.....		
training programs are unavailable or inadequate.....		
lack of administrative support.....		
unlikely to produce desired results.....		
threatenedautonomy.....		
need for continuing professional development.....		
insufficient role definition.....		
teacher attitudes/ resistance.....		
special education funding restrictions.....		
inadequate operational definition.....		
differing perceptions of the consultants' role.....		
consultant skills lacking.....		
insufficientresearch.....		
Other perceived obstacles ? _____		

Your assistance in this endeavour is greatly appreciated.

Thank-you.

Sincerely, Sheila Wilson

Appendix C**CONSENT FORM
To Participate In a Study of
Collaborative Consultation:
Practitioner's Perspective**

I _____ hereby consent to participate in Sheila Wilson's research project. I understand that I will be interviewed and I give my permission that these interviews may be audiotaped and may be used as part of the data in this study. After being transcribed the tapes will be destroyed.

I further agree to allow transcription of my personal journal entries.

I understand that reasonable measure will be taken by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of the research data and my anonymity within the research project. I have been informed that pseudonyms for the participating students will be used in the journal and interview transcriptions as well as in the final report of the research project. The final report will be drafted so as not to reveal the identity of the students involved. I have further been assured that the interview data will be kept in complete confidence and will not be viewed by persons other than the researcher without my prior written consent. I also understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, and data collected will be destroyed. I understand that I am not compelled to participate in any aspect of this research.

DATE

SIGNATURE

Appendix D**A Critical Incidents Interview with Valerie****Incident #1****Describe the general circumstances surrounding the incident.**

Last year the special education teacher came in and was helping during the reading period. The emphasis was on a few special needs children, but basically she worked with just about anyone who wanted to work with her. It was helpful. She helped people reading and diagnosed some difficulties and worked on those needs with those special kids. Overall I felt I was directing and she was working under my direction. Initially, I said these are the children that I see that need the help and this is the sort of thing I'd like you to be doing with them and she'd do that. She also came up with ideas of her own. It's changed a lot this year. I feel that you're giving me more ideas. It's not just me saying I'd like you to do this with these children. You're coming up with ideas. We're transforming together about ideas we could use. And they're new ideas. So I'm enabled to break new ground because I have someone to bounce ideas off of and someone as a resource, and someone to give me new ideas. Someone to help me develop where I want my ideas to go. You also, act as a liaison between what's happening in other primary classrooms. It's making it more possible for all of us to team teach. We're no longer trying to work it all out in isolation. Especially when it's all new to everyone. Everyone would like to support in changing.

Do you see any changes in yourself personally as a result of the consulting relationships?

It's easier for me to make changes if I feel like I'm being supported - I have someone to ask questions to - I have reassurance that some of the things I'm doing aren't bombing out. We can get ideas from each other about things that might

not work out the way we expected. It's good not to work in isolation - especially when you're trying new things.

What changes or development do you think this process had on students or the class environment?

At first I wondered about integrating special needs students right into the classroom rather than having them receive specific skills help. I was wondering how that was going to work. Not I feel more positive about it because you can manage that if you can manage to get an activity that's wide enough that everyone can work at their own level. They can do it at any end of the scale. Everyone is working and being challenged. Then I think it's okay. It's desirable because the special needs kids have models that will stretch them.

Is it working as a positive thing for regular kids?

Oh yes! My worry has always been at the upper and lower end. Either you think you aren't challenging them enough, or it's the other when you think you aren't explaining it clearly enough. And they're not getting enough out of it because they don't understand what to do. So if you can an activity that's going to be that broad and open I've never really worried about the regular kids.

Were there any difficulties related to that incident?

No. I've felt very lucky to have help in my room. I've appreciated the person. I'm happy to get the extra help.

The only negative would be that I wasn't really using the person enough. That we weren't using the people power as well as we could. I wonder if we could have done better.

Otherwise it's always been helpful.

Do you notice any changes in the school as a result of the new consultant role?

The first year is overwhelming. The integrated multi-level classroom has been preferable for awhile.

In the beginning you were trying to work just with the special needs kids, now you're working with the whole group

and trying to develop strategies that will work for the whole group. And I think that's best. Rather than two teachers in two corners, each trying to do our own thing. It seems to work a lot better to work together and give support to the special needs kids, but they're doing the same thing as everyone else. That make more sense.

Any suggestions or comments?

Every month it feels a little more comfortable. It's a real different approach and most people feel overwhelmed from the start. What we need to think of is that it's going to take five to seven years to integrate them into your classroom bit by bit. When I get panicky I like to think of that. And I think okay, I'll try this a step at a time and when I'm ready to integrate this change into how I'm doing things in my classroom it'll just come a step at a time and I can see the steps we've taken. We've evolved slowly, I can see it as an evolution kind of thing. It's a growing process for all of us. We're in transition. We're getting closer to our goal.

We have some reflective periods - but there's never enough time. If you're going to change a program you need time to talk about it.

We don't need to feel we have to make changes overnight. We can do it in gradual pieces.

Incident #2

One incident was when we had a pullout situation for a child who lacked certain skills. He used to be pulled out and given very specific, guided help. It was for different skills. It was for a combination of academic skills and social/emotional behaviour because he was not fitting in with the classroom. So he was pulled out and on his own program, with the idea of trying to fit him back in. I concluded that if he was constantly pulled out, there was no time for him to fit back in. So trying to fit in half way through the year wasn't working. I communicated with the special education teacher/consultant - "okay this is happening - how do I handle

this?" I was having trouble trying to get this child to focus in.

In the beginning it was helpful having the child pulled out while I established things with the rest of the class. I was later more able to draw the child in. The consultant already got a program started for the child. It was basically his own program and I was able to incorporate that in with the rest of the class and I was gradually able to fit him back in. I thought it was helpful. At the beginning of the year he needed very, very specific help; one to one, that I couldn't give him. Even throughout the rest of the year I wasn't able to give it to him but by then he had his own program going. I was able to help him and he was starting to work within small groups. I began to see that when the social - emotional problems began to settle down, he started to fit in more. He was able to sit in a classroom without totally disrupting and be a part of a class. I do think they need to be part of a classroom as much as possible. But some need extra help beyond what I'm able to do, and I think there's a place for that.

What impact did this have on your personal/professional development?

I think I become more aware of special needs and that I am limited in my training. Pulling them back into the classroom - I saw some neat things happening with the rest of the class and their association with this kid.

I became more tolerant and understanding. It's a growth process. I developed more patience.

How would you describe your relationship or the process of working with the consultant?

The consultant knew what she was doing. I came to rely on her professional judgement and seek out help. I would ask her for suggestions. It was very helpful. It gave me a sounding board. I liked to talk together. We worked

together. It was great. I think we developed a good relationship because we had this kid we needed to help. We had two of us working on it instead of one. It made it much stronger.

Incident #3

I had group things planned as a whole group and a couple of kids were receiving special skills in instruction from the consultant part of the time. When they hit in the middle of something they were lost. It was difficult. I had to learn to have my expectations different for those children. They couldn't be expected to do what the others did. At first I thought the special ed teacher's help was a hinderance because I wanted everyone there for the lesson, doing the same thing. It was a disruption. But I had to reevaluate what I was doing. And say, which is doing the most good for those children. They were getting more help with their own program. I had to have different expectations for them. It took time to develop that idea and come around to it. Trying to get them all caught up with the others wasn't working. I realized how the curriculum doesn't fit everyone. I changed my way of thinking. My teaching methods changed. Whenever you're forced out of old ways of doing things and have to reevaluate the way you're teaching you grow. I began to look at the whole child more.

Incident #4

I am for a first time, starting to work on an totally individualized program for a special needs child within, but separate from, the rest of the class. The special ed teacher is helping tremendously with that child because he can't fit in with the rest of the class. A program has been worked out for him based on the special needs that he has. It's been tremendous. Two heads are better than one. The extra reinforcement that has been given by finding special material that fit the needs has been super beneficial. I would of had to dig and dig and dig to find some of the same things. The

specialist knows the materials and exactly what the child needs.

Everyone in the class - the kids - are becoming aware that everyone is at different levels or stages of development, and as they are becoming more aware of it, it is causing less problems and less disruptions in the classroom. We're beginning to see some progress with the kids.

VITA

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April 21, 1993

Date