

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

A FORMATIVE EVALUATION MODEL FOR ONLINE TEACHERS

by

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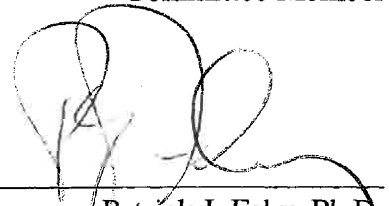
The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Athabasca University Governing Council for acceptance of the thesis "A Formative Evaluation Model for Online Teachers" submitted by Edward John Main in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Distance Education.



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Miriam, whose ever-supportive and unwavering encouragement has been an inspiration to me during this undertaking. It is further dedicated to my late parents who would have been equally supportive and proud.

ABSTRACT

Teachers are often frustrated with conventional evaluation practices normally used to establish their effectiveness, permanent status and promotion. Educators tend to take a dim view of evaluation because ultimately it is their teaching ability and expertise that is being scrutinized. In practice, however, ability and knowledge are often secondary to classroom management skills that are, or are not, exhibited during the evaluation process. Both summative and formative evaluations require time, observation, and competence of the examiner. Regrettably, the time taken to perform the evaluation is often rushed. Fairness demands that those teachers in need of more specific professional growth be given a chance before they are dismissed.

There exists a multitude of literature dealing with the notion of teacher evaluation. To date, there is very little published research dealing specifically with the formative evaluation of web-based instruction. For teachers working in an online environment, the existing Rocky Mountain School District summative system is woefully deficient, as it does not consider the implications of asynchronous learning environments. The lack of an existing formative evaluation system leaves teachers without an evaluation structure from which professional development can be obtained. Ignoring the uniqueness of teaching online while assuming that present systems are appropriate and transferable is unidirectional and educationally myopic.

This study offers a formative evaluation model for use with adult educators who teach at a distance with web-based instruction. The model rose from the results of a literature review and a survey presented to adult educators using web-based instruction. The literature indicated, among other things, that an evaluation method utilized should be appropriate for a given

situation. The survey determined that the present evaluation system was considered to be unsatisfactory and that the subjects would consider utilizing a formative evaluation model.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

An integral, albeit somewhat suspiciously viewed aspect of education, is the process of evaluation. There are hardly any areas in education that have the capability to create as much fervor for educators as the evaluation of teachers (Gitlin & Smyth, 1989). The use of the word “evaluation” presupposes a negative connotation that can immediately raise the defenses of many teachers. Educators tend to take a dim view of evaluation because ultimately it is their teaching ability and expertise that is being scrutinized. Annual evaluations of educators that amount to a single stopover by the school administrator, resulting in a summative rating of performance, strike fear in the hearts of many.

In practice, however, ability and knowledge are often secondary to classroom management skills that are, or are not, exhibited during the evaluation process. For teachers working in an online environment, the existing summative system is woefully deficient. It does not consider the implications of asynchronous learning environments; rather, it is intended for use within regular face-to-face classroom situations, administered by school administrators. Ignoring the uniqueness of teaching online while assuming that present systems are appropriate and transferable is educationally unsound. “Distance education, as a distinct profession, will remain undefined and undervalued until there exists more widely accepted principles of good practice for distance educators” (Beaudoin, 1991, p.6).

Traditionally, teachers have been evaluated using summative instruments, ones that quantify competence. Teachers that have proven themselves to be more than capable based upon summative methods require measures that will provide for a means of professional development.

The focus of formative evaluation is on professional growth. With formative evaluation, teachers choose areas of focus for a particular period of time and can use multiple sources of feedback (self, peers, supervisors, parents, and students) and methods (portfolios, action research, journals, videotaping) to document progress toward completion of goals (SERVE Leadership Institute).

The recent concept of web-based instruction calls for new paradigms of evaluation.

“The history of educational evaluation is somewhat like a river, picking up force from many tributaries while wandering in various directions over a variety of terrains that affect what it appears to be at any particular time” (Deschler, 1984, p.4). The principal territory that teacher evaluation has been traversing is that of educator competence or lack thereof, leading to grounds for dismissal. As a result, teachers have attempted to seek protection from punitive evaluations by way of collective agreements. An often mentioned issue that teachers have with evaluation lies in the deficiency of “consensus on specific criteria for what constitutes good teaching” (Rebell, 1990, p.339).

Fair and appropriate teacher evaluation is equally important for online teachers as for more traditional modes of instruction. In both cases, there is a need for “a plan to regularly monitor and evaluate performance over a defined period” (Fahy, 2001, p.298). Good distance education online instructional practices are fundamentally identical to good traditional teaching practices, and “those factors which influence good instruction may be generally universal across different environments and populations” (Wilkes & Burnham, 1991, p.43).

“Web-based instruction (WBI) can be viewed as an innovative approach for delivering instruction to a remote audience, using the Web as the medium” (Kahn, 1997, p.5).

While online instruction can provide increased educational opportunities for both students and teachers alike, it also brings new challenges and concerns for teachers when it comes to their evaluation.

Teachers are often frustrated with conventional evaluation practices normally used to establish their effectiveness, permanent status and promotion. “As the Web is likely to grow significantly as an important medium for delivering instruction, it is important to develop suitable formative evaluation techniques” (Nichols, as cited in Khan, 1995, p.374). In the absence of a formal evaluation process for web-based instruction, this proposal will appraise what is presently being done and provide a model from which a formative evaluation process can be extrapolated. A successful evaluation system should help teachers improve professionally.

Purpose of Study

Having educators reflect upon existing practice while varying current approaches would help in providing both definition and value. “Reflection-in-action is an essential process by which professionals can assess the efficacy of their practice and initiate appropriate interventions and adjustments designed to enhance their roles” (Beaudoin, 1991, p.5). It also allows for the implementation of a formative evaluation model that can be thought of as being supportive of professional growth.

The key purpose of formative teacher evaluation is to improve instruction. It provides teachers with valuable information upon which instructional modification and professional development can be made. The key to a successful formative evaluation process is that it be

allowed to be an individual, self-directed process that is accommodating and compliant of individual objectives.

One purpose of this study is to develop a formative evaluation model for adult educators using web-based instruction for Distance Education at the high school level. There is presently no formative evaluation model in existence within Rocky Mountain School District. The recommendations will be extrapolated from predictive indicators, resulting from a cross-sectional survey of Adult Education teachers within the Rocky Mountain School District #6 (British Columbia).

From the recommendations will arise a formative evaluation model that will support teacher development. Using the model, teachers will be able to perform a continuous evaluation and improvement plan of their online professional development and instructional capabilities. “Students are better learners and learn more deeply when they receive timely, specific feedback. The same axiom applies to teaching” (Drake & Holt, 2000). The more information that teachers can gather about their teaching the more that they can make informed changes that will be beneficial both for students and teachers alike while becoming masters of their own fate.

Operational Definitions for use in this Study

The following terms have been defined for the context of this study in order to assist the reader:

Formative Evaluation: Is an on-going process to be considered at all stages of instruction. Will enable the instructor to improve the course as he/she proceeds (Engineering Outreach at the University of Idaho, n.d.). Formative evaluation is also “gathering information on the adequacy of instructional products or programs and using this information as a basis for further

development” (Szabo, 1998, p.48). Formative evaluation is seen as a means of improving instruction and supporting professional development.

Summative Evaluation: Summative evaluation is used in order to “. . . describe the overall successes of the program and to determine whether the program should be continued” (Wilde & Sockey, 1995). Summative evaluation allows for unbiased, objective answers and conclusions to be obtained and can subsequently decide whether the program is achieving the goals that were originally put forth. (Kemp, 1985)

Clinical Supervision: “Clinical supervision is an intensive process designed to improve instruction by conferring with a teacher on lesson planning, observing the lesson, analyzing the observational data, and giving the teacher feedback about the observation” (Glatthorn, 1984, p. 3). Clinical supervision of a teacher does not necessarily have to involve the school administrator as it may involve peers. By the very nature, clinical supervision may be viewed as complementary to formative evaluation.

Web-Based Instruction: Khan (1997, p. 5) defines Web-Based Instruction (WBI) as: “. . . an innovative approach for delivering instruction to a remote audience, using the Web as the medium.” For the purpose of the present proposal, Web-Based Instruction is defined as instruction delivered in whole or in part on the World Wide Web (Szabo, 1998).

Online Instruction: For the purpose of the present proposal Online Instruction is defined as instruction delivered in whole or in part on the World Wide Web and or with the use of LANs (Local Area Networks) or WANs (Wide Area Networks). It is used interchangeably with web-based instruction.

Online: “Active and prepared for operation. Also suggests access to a computer network.” (Engineering Outreach at the University of Idaho, n.d.). For the purposes of this

proposal, the aforementioned computer network includes the use of LANs (Local Area Networks), WANs (Wide Area Networks) and the World Wide Web.

Distance Education: “The process of providing instruction when students and instructors are separated by physical distance and or technology, often in tandem with face-to-face communication, is used to bridge the gap” (Engineering Outreach at the University of Idaho, n.d.).

Assumptions

Fundamental to this study are several assumptions. It is assumed that the Adult Educators who are using web-based instruction Distance Education at the high school level are indeed interested in seeking professional growth. It is assumed that these educators are able to honestly provide and accept feedback that fosters professional growth. It is also assumed that the respondents will complete the questionnaires used in this study honestly and accurately.

Delimitations and Limitations

When speaking of evaluation of web-based instruction, the quality of instructional materials and success of the program in general are often mentioned. Caution is required to focus the study on the area of formative evaluation of the teachers and their instruction rather than instructional materials. Further caution is required to differentiate between web-based distance education instruction and paper-based distance education. The proposal will concern itself with the formative evaluation of web-based instruction.

The target population of the study will be Adult Educators teaching high school curriculum within the Rocky Mountain School District #6, British Columbia. That being said, extrapolation of the recommendations for use by other teachers (non-Adult Educators) at other levels would be possible. Consequently, caution will be required to centre the focus upon the public high school Adult Educator.

A crucial component with formative teacher evaluation is ensuring that the framework for assembling the information is not externally guided and condemnatory but rather teacher-directed, individualized, and encouraging of personal growth goals. By examining only the formative evaluation process, the paper is not proposing that there is a clear dichotomy between the formative and summative evaluation process. Rather, in doing so, it is proposed that the formative evaluation process is one that deserves recognition by itself. “Material which is gathered for formative purposes may be used for summative decisions, just as data which is gathered for summative purposes can be and often is used in formative ways” (Calder, 1994, p.23).

Summary

“Effective teachers do not regard evaluations as supervision; rather, they regard evaluation sessions as a way of finding out how they can improve” (Wong & Wong, 1998, p.302). Teachers look upon typical evaluation attempts with disdain and mistrust. Typically, summative evaluation occurs with input from only one source, that being the evaluator. Summative evaluations can occur with an evaluator who is less than knowledgeable about a curricular area. Consequently, the evaluation tends to be focussed only on classroom management.

Web-based instruction is an innovative approach that demands suitable evaluation techniques.

If time is spent reviewing the available literature, developing effective teacher evaluation systems seems a hopeless task. Regardless of these difficulties, most regular school systems must have a functioning evaluation system. Whether the mandate is legislative, contractual, political, or professional, the average school must be able to point to some systematic procedure to monitor the performance of its employees. The question for school districts is this: given the fact that it is unlikely that there exists now or in the near future any totally reliable teacher evaluation system, what can be done to develop the most realistic and effective local system possible? (McGreal, 1983, p.viii)

The purpose of this study is to develop a formative evaluation model for use with web-based instruction within Rocky Mountain School District #6. The model will promote and foster professional growth rather than being disciplinary or condemnatory.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

“Evaluation is a judgment regarding the worth or value of something” (Jolliffe, Ritter & Stevens, 2001, p.249). There exists a multitude of literature dealing with the notion of teacher evaluation. To date, there is very little published research dealing specifically with the formative evaluation of web-based instruction. This chapter presents a review of the literature related to formative evaluation of online instruction. In light of the comparatively minimal literature dealing specifically with the formative evaluation of online instruction, the chapter also provides a review of the literature dealing with teacher evaluation in broader terms. It begins with a presentation of several definitions and explanations of the term evaluation. Also provided is a rationale for developing new evaluation criteria, targeted specifically towards online instruction. Why formative evaluation is the method of choice and what factors may require examination during such processes is also included.

Present Situation

“Traditionally, local school systems have emphasized the accountability or summative function of teacher evaluation” (McGreal, 1983, p.2). Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease (1983) use the idiom teacher evaluation in terms of the compilation and subsequent use of information in order to judge a teacher. This is but one of many interpretations of what teacher evaluation could mean, depending upon purpose and context. Alkin (1972) feels that evaluation

is used to report summary data which is useful to decision makers when selecting alternatives. Sometimes evaluation is viewed as an examination of the effectiveness of teaching methods or materials being used. Bruner (1996) claims that more importantly, evaluation should be about obtaining the necessary knowledge to improve upon these areas. Gorton and Schneider (1991) view evaluation as a process whereby the strengths and limitations of an individual or group are identified and defined.

The center of attention for teacher evaluation has been evolving over the years. With this adjustment has come an accompanying desire to produce discernible positive effects for actual instruction.

All teachers are evaluated at least once in their career (on entry to the profession) but by the use of criteria and acceptable standards of achievement which are never formally defined. They [the evaluation criteria] do, however, seem to relate closely to classroom performance. Clearly such an arrangement is unsatisfactory (Dennison & Shenton, 1987, p.170).

A common theme is that teacher evaluation should serve a role in the provision of outcomes that can result positively, in having significant effect upon the actual instruction that students receive (Peterson, 1995; Stiggins & Duke, 1988; Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin & Bernstein, 1984). By in large, teachers tend to agree with the notion that as an all-purpose function, evaluation should improve the quality of instruction. (Barrett, 1986; Bolton, 1973) Teachers will, however, rail against a process that is perceived as being extraneous and or disciplinary. (Darling-Hammond, 1986)

Effective teacher evaluation utilizes a mixed methodology when implemented (McConney, 1995; Wilson & Wood, 1996). McBride, Ruttan and Rice (1998) found that

employing a variety of techniques when conducting evaluations provides the best results. “To move beyond the narrow confines of one’s own teaching, multiple perspectives are necessary” (Daugherty, Grubb, Hirsch and Gillis, as cited in Cole, 2000, p.184). This differs from the common notion that teacher evaluation is a process that portrays the teacher as a supervised employee who can only benefit from a process that is top down in nature and process. Sawyer (2001) examined a school district where the top down summative process had resulted in extensive frustration with the one-way nature of the process. When the district adopted and implemented an evaluation process that allowed for teacher participation, satisfaction levels increased. “The greatest obstacle to teacher sense of efficacy, ironically, is lack of feedback about their performance – credible information about how well they are carrying out their responsibilities” (McLaughlin, 1984, p.195). “Evaluation needs to be participatory and reflective in order to be meaningful for teachers” (Weiss & Weiss, 1998). The present system in Rocky Mountain School District is either lacking or void in these areas. The proposed new criteria shall provide for feedback, reflection and participation.

Types of Evaluation

“Two evaluation types exist: formative and summative. Formative evaluation is a tool used to improve instruction. Summative evaluation is a tool used to make personnel decisions” (Barrett, 1986). “Formative means improving and developing while summative means evaluating” (Hazi, 1994, p.200). “The main purpose of formative or professional supervision is to identify needs for teacher improvement; whereas, the primary purpose of summative evaluation is to reach a determination on whether staff, particularly new members, should be retained, non-renewed, or dismissed” (Gorton & Schneider 1991, p. 289). Stiggins and Duke

(1990) conducted a survey leading them to propose that there were a number of indispensable circumstances for the teacher growth model of teacher evaluation to succeed. One of these was that any summative approaches to teacher evaluation remain largely independent of the formative approach.

Both summative and formative require time, observation, conferencing and competence of the examiner. Regrettably, the time taken to perform the evaluation is often rushed. Taking the time to perform a formative evaluation is however justified, based upon the potential outcomes and decreased tensions between the participants (Barber and Klein, 1983; Elliot and Chidley, 1985). “Teachers complain that the principal, or whoever is conducting the evaluation, does not have the time to gather quality information and provide useful feedback” (Boyd 1989). When combined with examiner incompetence, attitude towards the process is often unenthusiastic. This robs the evaluator of the credibility needed to carry out an effective evaluation (Boyd 1989).

Clinical Supervision

Inclusive and integral to these forms of evaluation is the notion of clinical supervision. Clinical supervision concerns itself with the improvement of professional practice by way of refinements in teaching and learning (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1983). “Clinical supervision is an intensive process designed to improve instruction by conferring with a teacher on lesson planning, observing the lesson, analyzing the observational data, and giving the teacher feedback about the observation” (Glatthorn, 1984, p. 3). The use of the word clinical indicates a face-to-face interaction between the educator and evaluator. (Goldhammer, 1969)

Clinical supervision performed in a formative manner places emphasis on feedback and training. The focal point is on assisting a teacher to do a better job, rather than disciplining them for what they might do improperly through the eyes of the evaluator. (Blake & DeMont, 1990)

Gorton and Schneider (1991, p.301) indicate that there are five major characteristics of proper clinical supervision:

1. Observations are related to the teacher's goals.
2. Observations and conferences are cyclical and part of a continuous process.
3. A database of information is developed from the observation process.
4. The teacher and supervisor jointly form final interpretations.
5. Subsequent teaching and observation sessions are based on hypothesis generation and testing.

Brennen (2001) outlines five phases of clinical supervision:

1. The reason and purpose for the observation.
2. The focus of the observation.
3. The method and form of observation to be used.
4. The time of observation.
5. The time for post-conference.

Arguably the most important aspect of the clinical supervision is the post-conference. It would be at this time that the teacher and evaluator would be able to scrutinize the collected data and prepare for future sessions and adjustments. However,

. . . the success of the follow-up conference depends in large part on the extent to which the teacher feels secure with and trustful of the supervisor, and the amount of planning

invested by the supervisor in preparation for the meeting. A teacher who does not feel comfortable with the supervisor and does not believe that the supervisor has his or her best interest at heart is unlikely to be cooperative. (Gorton & Schneider, p.306)

If there is not a minimum of trust and mutual respect achieved between both parties, then the success of the process becomes tenuous.

Evaluator Qualifications

Another contentious aspect of teacher evaluation is that of evaluator qualification. It would be easy to assume that those people who are made supervisors and administrators would be provided with continuous training on how to perform their job efficiently and effectively. “Teachers complain that few evaluators have any special training to help them plan and carry out a successful evaluation. Even worse, many have had little or no recent experience in the classroom” (Boyd, 1989). Educator evaluation carried out by school principals and other school-based supervisors have been found to lack strong reliability. Darling-Hammond (2001) states that this has “. . . been a function of principals' lack of time, inadequate expertise for evaluating all teaching situations, insufficient evaluation training, and inappropriate instrumentation.” Most “. . . teachers believe that when administrators walk into the classroom, they are entering territory in which the teacher knows just as much, if not more, about how to perform effectively” (McGreal, 1983, p. 38).

The issue of poorly trained supervisors is not unique to education.

Positive, useful employment training is rarely offered to business managers and supervisors . . . It is no small wonder, then, that many supervisors and managers lack confidence in their hiring abilities and that so many “employers” opt to sticking with

fixed, traditional ways of recruiting and hiring. They are simply borrowing the methods of the person who preceded them, crossing their fingers and hoping that nothing will go wrong (Bissonnette, 1994, p. 29).

If the business community has difficulty in securing minimally adequate, if not superior, training for its supervisors, it is not farfetched to assume that the teaching community experiences the same difficulties. Teaching and business are not alone in failing to train those who evaluate personnel. “Traditionally, there has been a lack of formal training for supervisors, a fact that Hoffman (1994) described as the mental health profession's ‘dirty little secret’ (p. 25)” (Getz, 1999). “Teacher evaluation is not something most school principals like to do. For one thing, they have little confidence in their ability to carry out fair, consistent, and meaningful evaluation of teachers’ classroom performance” (McLaughlin, 1984, p.200). “In most districts, principals receive little if any training related to their teacher evaluation responsibilities” (McLaughlin, 1984, p.201).

Expectations

A corollary to supervision and evaluation is the implied philosophy that teacher evaluation be a fair component in a professional development growth plan. “In most instances the difficulties arise not with the concept or general purpose, but from the way the evaluation is carried out” (Brandt, 1987, p.23). In the field of education, teachers are to assign either letter grades or marks in relation to expected learning outcomes. In the Province of British Columbia (1994), there are specific steps to be followed for the meeting of specific grading outcomes:

1. Learning outcomes for the activity and unit are identified to make clear what the student is expected to know and be able to do.

2. Specific criteria for the unit and activity are established. It is helpful for students to be involved in the establishing of criteria. In this way they understand what is expected of them.
3. Different levels of performance or models are developed.
4. Students participate in learning activities to allow them to practice the skills and acquire the required knowledge.
5. Students are given opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Teachers may have students represent their learning in a variety of ways. Assessment data is collected from tests, teacher observations, student self-assessment, written assignments, portfolios, and performance tasks.
6. Students' levels of performance are evaluated in relation to the criteria.
7. The teacher assigns a letter grade for the activity.

Teachers are expected to adhere to these guidelines and to provide adequate proof of established criteria to substantiate the assigned grade. Can we expect no less of the education system to implement a process whereby teachers are equally involved, permitted to fail and thereby grow while demonstrating performance enhancement through a variety of means? "A study conducted by Daniel entitled *Excellent Teachers, Their Qualities and Qualifications* (1994) stressed the need for multiple assessments of a teacher's effectiveness . . . which should be utilized in multidimensional assessments of teacher effectiveness" (Charles, 1986-87, p.64). Just as students are permitted to demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge in a variety of ways, and are not expected to learn or acquire at the same rate, so should educators be granted the same latitude.

Professional versus Technician

Perhaps the most difficult aspect in teacher evaluation is in deciding whether or not teachers are professionals, and require a process appropriate for a professional, or if they are merely technicians. This debate is not new, but as of yet is still unresolved. “One definition states that a professional is a person who engages in an activity for financial remuneration that other people engage in for recreation Another is that he is a person who helps other people. It is almost altruism in its purest form” (Frymier, in Lucio, 1969, p. 90). For example, when dealing with the medical profession or perhaps in needing a plumber,

Most readers probably realize that they know too little about either medicine or plumbing to be able to evaluate how well the practitioners know their business or whether they are using the best possible procedures. But the public does not acknowledge similar ignorance when it comes to teaching. Everyone seems to know the best way to teach (Coker, Medley, Soar, 1983, p. 240).

“A lawyer can judge success by case outcome; an agronomist can measure achievement by the number and type of new agricultural techniques in place. Teachers, however, have no such unequivocal or unitary measure” (McLaughlin, 1984, p. 196). Further, “we usually evaluate technicians (e.g. plumbers, auto mechanics) by the results they produce, but we do not judge professionals (e.g. physicians, dentists, lawyers) in this fashion” (Coker et. al. 1983). It is reasonable to state that the type of problems professionals and technicians are expected to resolve differ in nature. “We believe that teachers should be evaluated as professionals, not as technicians, because teachers deal with complex problems” (Coker et. al. 1983).

The problems confronted by a technician are likely to be much less complex than those encountered by a professional. Most or all of the technician’s problems will have known

solutions; thus, if the diagnosis is accurate, the outcome of the treatment can be predicted with a high degree of certainty . . . It would be manifestly unfair, then, to evaluate an attorney by outcomes alone, since some cases are certain to be more difficult than others to argue successfully. Most people would probably agree that the same thing holds true for teaching: it is harder to succeed in some teaching situations than in others. (Coker et. al. 1984)

Frymier (as cited in Lucio, 1969, pp. 91 – 93) postulates that there are six characteristics by which a true professional may be characterized:

1. They provide an essential service for other people.
2. They have a methodology, which is unique and peculiar to that professional group.
3. They make judgments and decisions, which affect the lives and wellbeing of those they serve.
4. They have a code of ethics.
5. Those groups that are truly professional use the power of the professional organization to impose a discipline upon their membership, to insist that every member of the group adhere to the ethical way.

Due Process

An essential consideration in the process of evaluation is the concept of due process. Due process ensures that an individual receives a fair and just decision with regards to dismissal.

“In staff evaluation this means that the criteria must be legitimate, the individual must be informed of shortcomings, must be given sufficient opportunity to correct them, and must be provided with adequate supervision and assistance to do so” (Gorton, 1991, p.299). Also,

In the case of a less than satisfactory report, any major deficiencies identified by the evaluator will be discussed with the teacher. A plan for improving performance will be developed jointly with the local Association, the teacher and the Board and shall be made available to the teacher. This plan will contain a time frame for improvement and the commencement of subsequent summative evaluation (Collective Agreement, School District #6, Rocky Mountain).

Fairness demands that those teachers in need of more specific professional growth be given a chance before they are dismissed. In the application of due process, allowances must be made for teaching style. Just as students learn through a variety of styles, so do teachers tend to teach with a variety of styles, while trying to accommodate the particular learning styles of their students. When evaluating, supervisors should consider that while the available process may suit some teaching styles, it might not suit all. It is also common practice to rate teachers on some type of scale. "For example, a teacher may be rated as outstanding in 'organization'. Although this appears straightforward, 'organization' is a high inference term that may be interpreted in as many ways as there are observers" (Peterson, 1985, p.40).

Present Rocky Mountain School District Evaluation

"In a majority of school districts, teacher evaluation constitutes an uneven, desultory ritual that contributes little to school improvement but much to teacher anxiety and administrator burden" (McLaughlin, 1984 p.193). The present evaluation process is completely void of any evaluation criteria. Administrators are free to set what they feel are the criteria which are required to be met. Without any legitimate criteria, teachers are at the mercy of any particular supervisor. The language that governs the process is focused on school-aged children within a

regular classroom. There is no mention of professional growth for the teacher, or of alternative instructional methods such as web-based instruction let alone adult students. What follows are the passages found within the collective agreement (Collective Agreement, School District #6, Rocky Mountain), pertaining to teacher evaluation:

The process shall include:

1. a series of observations each followed by an observation conference;
2. a post-evaluation conference for review of the draft report;
3. preparation of a final report;
4. an opportunity for the Teacher to submit a written commentary to be attached to the final report; and
5. filing of the final report.

Rationale for a New Evaluation Criteria

Web-Based Instruction is in the process of changing the conventional interaction between teachers and students. No longer do teachers and students always find themselves in the same physical space at the same time. “Reid (1997) mentions that methods of assessing the teaching and learning experience in online education are in high demand but short supply. No measurement yet exists that would adequately evaluate how well a faculty member performs in a virtual classroom” (Hazari and Schno, 1999).

“Instructors involved in web-based course design and delivery require competencies that have not necessarily been considered important in a face-to-face and print-based distance education context” (Learn Online, n.d.). Curda and Curda (2001) indicate that formative evaluation conducted parallel to the execution of an online course is perhaps the best method that

a teacher can use to receive important information in order to make improvements. Day (2000) suggests that for those involved with technology-based instruction, alteration of existing evaluation criteria or drafting of new criteria is essential while paying attention to the ways in which the current evaluative structures may fail them.

Nichols (1995) calls to attention the extra complications faced by on-line teachers who seek to implement formative evaluation in order to ensure the effectiveness of instruction. Using conventional evaluation methods can present a considerable degree of impracticality (Nichols, as cited in Khan, 1995, p. 369). Judgments made concerning effective teaching vary according to particular circumstances (Koon & Murray, 1995; Smith & Cranton, 1992).

Recently, numerous publications have been intent on selling particular evaluation models (Lewis, 1973; Manatt, 1976; Redfer, 1980; Iwanicki, 1981). While these and other models are potentially sound and functional, it would be inappropriate to “buy” a particular model and attempt to put it in place in a local setting without taking into account local contextual factors. Even though the above-mentioned authors may not have had the wholesale adoption of their particular system in mind when they proposed it, this is a disturbingly frequent occurrence (McGreal, 1983, p.viii).

Therefore, it is fundamental that the evaluation method utilized be appropriate for a given situation. Having an evaluation model designed for the use of teachers involved with web-based instruction within Rocky Mountain School District is necessary.

There is no template for success that teachers can lay beside their performance and assess the extent to which they have achieved their personal and professional goals. And long-term outcomes may never be evident to teachers. Consequently, teachers must rely on the reflection and feedback of others to gauge their effectiveness and support professional

pride. For this feedback to be credible, it must come from individuals who teachers believe can make authoritative judgements about their performance (McLaughlin, 1984, p.196).

Summary

“The real problem is that in schools appraisal [evaluation] will be seen as a punitive measure, to punish the bad teachers and to chide the others into increased efforts. Unless well organised this will be the perception of many teachers about appraisal” (Dennison & Shenton, 1987, p.171). Reading suggests that the time is ripe for an effective evaluation procedure to be implemented, one that demands cooperative planning and execution, and that it be seen as contributing to professional growth. Despite the multitude of literature dealing with teacher evaluation, there exists little in the way of focus on the formative evaluation of web-based instruction. Presently, there is a whole host of definitions and interpretations of what teacher evaluation should look like.

This literature review presented various assessments of what is commonly considered to be thought of with respect to teacher evaluation. Additionally, rationale for the advancement of a new formative evaluation model was presented coupled with why formative evaluation is the method of choice. “Evaluation systems designed to support teacher growth and development through an emphasis on formative evaluation techniques [have] produced higher levels of satisfaction and more thoughtful and reflective practice while still being able to satisfy accountability demands” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The proposed new formative evaluation model will be developed based upon the literature review and survey results, formulating a fresh and situation-based model.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to develop a formative evaluation model for Adult Educators using web-based instruction at the high school level. The recommendations will be acquired from predictive indicators, resulting from a cross-sectional survey of Adult Education teachers within the Rocky Mountain School District #6 and a literature review. From the recommendations will develop a formative evaluation model that will support and encourage teacher professional growth.

Questions that need to be answered in order to achieve these purposes include:

1. Would the Adult Educators of Rocky Mountain School District #6, lacking a prescribed model to guide them in formative evaluation of their instruction, welcome a formative evaluation model that they could employ?
2. Is the present evaluation system working?
3. Is there an existing formative evaluation model for online teachers?

In summary, would the adult educators use a custom formative evaluation model if the present system was lacking and there was no other model in existence?

In order to help answer these questions, the use of self-report survey research and a review of applicable literature were carried out. “In self-report study, information is solicited from individuals using, for example, questionnaires, interviews, or standardized attitude scales” (Gay, 1992, p.219). Self-report survey research is appropriate to answer questions about “the specific characteristics of a large group of persons, objects, or institutions” (Jaeger, 1997, p.449).

“Self-report research requires the collection of standardized, quantifiable information from all members of a population or sample. In other words, in order to obtain comparable data from all subjects, the same questions must be asked” (Gay, 1992, p.223).

As the two purposes of this study were to determine or uncover the perceptions of online high school teachers regarding current teacher evaluation practices and to determine if there was a need for revised evaluation for online teachers, survey research methods were determined to be suitable and were as a result employed. A review of the literature indicates that there is very little published research dealing specifically with the formative evaluation of web-based instruction. There however exists a mass of literature dealing with the notion of teacher evaluation in general. The literature from both areas was examined in determining the make-up of the proposed evaluation model.

This chapter will describe the development of the survey instrument, sampling methods, survey implementation, and data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Every effort was made through the plan and execution of this study to ensure confidentiality of respondents. Further, every effort was made to ensure that no individual could potentially be harmed by the publication of the results of this survey. Preceding the initiation of the research activities, ethics approval was obtained from the Athabasca University Ethics Committee. A copy of the letter granting ethics approval for this study has been included as Appendix A.

All participants received a covering letter giving a basic description of the study. The letter assured the recipients that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that they could

withdraw at any time. They were also assured that responses would remain completely anonymous, and that only anonymous, aggregate or group data would be reported. A copy of the covering letter for participants has been included as Appendix B. Returned questionnaires and correspondence resulting from this study will be stored in a secure location for seven years from the date this thesis is completed, then will be destroyed. All participants were asked to sign and return a Consent for Research Participation form. A copy of the Consent form has been included as Appendix C.

Development of the Survey Instrument

Reasonable and suitable teacher evaluation is just as imperative for online teachers as it is for more traditional modes of instruction. In order to gauge thoughts, judgements, and opinions of both of the current summative system and a potential formative system, an original Likert Scale instrument survey questionnaire was developed. One individual, a teacher-librarian with expertise in teacher evaluation, reviewed a rough copy of the questionnaire, in order to corroborate the content as it related to teacher evaluation. Two educators from a neighbouring school district reviewed the questionnaire for issues of clarity, readability, and usability. Following revision, two adult educators from a neighbouring school district pre-tested the questionnaire. Pretesting the questionnaire yielded information concerning suggestions for improvement (Gay, 1992). Subsequent to slight revisions arising from the pre-testing, the survey questionnaire was mailed to the participants. A copy of the survey questionnaire has been included in Appendix D.

Sampling Methods

The sample to be studied varies in size (10 to 12) depending upon the school year. At the time of this study, there were 11 potential participants. “In general, random sampling involves defining the population, identifying each member of the population, and selecting individuals for the sample on a completely chance basis” (Gay, 1992, p.127). “A randomly chosen sample is a fair sample, in the sense that every member of the universe has an equal chance of being included” (Simon & Berstein, 1995, p.111). “Because the purpose of the descriptive survey is to obtain an accurate picture of the universe, random sampling is particularly important” (Simon & Berstein, 1995, p.167). With such a small population to work with, ensuring that all potential candidates had an equal and objective opportunity of being selected was important. “Samples should be as large as possible; in general, the larger the sample size, the more representative it is likely to be, and the more generalizable the results of the study are likely to be” (Gay, 1992, p.142).

Survey Implementation

The survey questionnaires were mailed to all 11 of the potential participants on October 11th 2002. A self-addressed return envelope accompanied the surveys in order to facilitate their return.

Data Collection and Analysis

There was one individual who voluntarily withdrew due to the temporary nature of their teaching position. Four surveys were mailed back using the self-addressed envelope. Six were returned using the school district’s internal mail service. The 91% return did not

necessitate that any follow-up activities be performed to deal with nonresponse. (Gay, 1992) Upon collection of all 10 returned questionnaires, they were inputted for analysis. Information from each subject was entered at random. Subject names and identifying features were removed, with each given a random number within the SPSS program. There is no correlation between each subjects SPSS number and their sequence in data collection.

Data from the 10 completed surveys were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program version 7.5 and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies. Descriptive statistics were chosen for this thesis, as the most important of the two purposes was to determine the likelihood of the population to embrace a new formative evaluation model. “The first step in data analysis is to describe, or summarize, the data using descriptive statistics. In some studies, such as certain questionnaire surveys, the entire analysis procedure may consist solely of calculating and interpreting descriptive statistics” (Gay, 1992, p.388).

Summary

This chapter has presented a description of the methodology utilized in this study. It has described ethical considerations, the methods used in the development of the survey instrument, sampling methods, the survey implementation, methods used in data collection, and the methods used for data analysis of collected data.

In order to help answer the research questions, the use of an original Likert Scale instrument survey questionnaire and a review of applicable literature were carried out. Survey questionnaires were distributed to 11 potential participants. One person withdrew from the study with the remaining 10 subjects returning the questionnaires. “Research suggests that first

mailings will typically result in close to a 50% return rate, and a second mailing will increase the percentage by about 20% . . .” (Gay, 1992, p. 230). The initial 91% return rate did not necessitate a subsequent follow-up drive. The returned questionnaires were entered into the SPSS software program for analysis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

One focus of this study was to develop a formative evaluation model for Adult Educators using web-based instruction at the high school level. In order to achieve this purpose, the study had two broad objectives. The first objective was to determine the experiences and attitudes of teachers with regards to the present system of evaluation. The second objective was to determine the attitudes and thoughts that participants had towards using a new formative evaluation model. Adult Educators were surveyed using an original Likert Scale instrument. Data from completed surveys was entered into the SPSS software program and analyzed. This chapter presents the results of the survey.

Subjects

The subjects of the survey were Adult Educators who are using web-based instruction to deliver high school level curriculum. There were 11 potential participants during the fall of 2002. One of these individuals voluntarily withdrew due to the temporary nature of their teaching position, as they were working under a 0.3 temporary contract that expired in December 2002. Of the remaining 10 possible subjects, 10 completed surveys were received for an overall response rate of 91 per cent.

Demographic Characteristics

Respondents reported ages ranging from 33 to 60 years of age. Table 1 provides information pertaining to the range of ages for participants while Table 2 provides the participant's ages by gender.

Table 1.

Participant Age

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	10	33	60	47.7	8.12

Table 2.

Participant Age by Gender

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Female	3	45	57	50.3
Male	7	33	60	46.6

Respondents all had a minimum of an undergraduate Bachelor degree, with many indicating that they have additionally obtained a Masters degree. Table 3 compares gender and educational level of the participants using a crosstabulation. A crosstabulation table displays the number of cases falling into each combination of the categories of two or more categorical variables. "Crosstabulation tables (also called contingency tables) display the relationship between two or more categorical variables One way to think about a crosstabulation table is as a joint frequency distribution for more than one variable" (Boğaziçi University Computer Center, n.d.).

Table 3.

Highest Level of Education and Gender Crosstabulation – Count and Percentage

Highest Level of Education	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Undergraduate Bachelors Degree	40%	60%	50%
Masters Degree	20%	80%	50%
Totals	30%	70%	100%

The undergraduate degrees obtained by the participants indicate an interesting variety of backgrounds and specialties in terms of training, with 40% being elementary trained. Table 4 provides further detail.

Table 4.

Occurrences and Frequency of Undergraduate Major

Undergraduate Major	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bachelor of General Studies	1	10.0	10.0
Elementary Education	4	40.0	50.0
Physical Education	1	10.0	60.0
Secondary English	1	10.0	70.0
Counseling	1	10.0	80.0
Mathematics	1	10.0	90.0
Business Education	1	10.0	100.0
Totals	10	100.0	100.0

Participant Experiences with the Present System of Evaluation

When asked in question 2.1 about satisfaction with the current system of evaluation, all participants indicated a level of dissatisfaction. The majority indicated strong disagreement with the current system, as is indicated in Table 5. There were two comments provided by participants to this question. They both indicate a lack of respect for the present system. One such comment was: “I have had several evaluations over a long career. In all cases the exercise was badly flawed in that the evaluators did not have the skills or knowledge of either pedagogy or subject to make any kind of valid comments. Many principals are incompetent!” This notion of supervisor incompetence with regards to evaluation is not unusual, and was confirmed during the literature review.

Table 5.

Frequencies of Responses for Question 2-1, satisfied with the current system

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	80.0	80.0	80.0
Somewhat Disagree	2	20.0	20.0	20.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Further to the question of whether “You are satisfied with the current evaluation system used by Rocky Mountain School District #6”, all of the male respondents were in strong disagreement, as is evident from Table 6.

Table 6.

Crosstabulation of level of agreement with Question 2.1

You are satisfied with the current evaluation system used by Rocky Mountain School District #6.	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly Disagree	1 – 33%	7 – 100%	8 – 80%
Somewhat Disagree	2 – 66%		2 – 20%
Total	3 – 100%	7 – 100%	10 – 100%

When questioned about whether the current system was valuable, either professionally or personally, the overwhelming sentiment was that it has not been beneficial. The sentiment was overwhelmingly negative, with 100% strongly disagreeing with the statement; “The current system under which you are evaluated has been professionally beneficial.” One comment categorized the experience as “Irritating, frustrating, and a cause for despair” while another was that “this [the current evaluation system] would be akin to having a deaf person describe a symphony.” These responses are found in tables 7 and 8.

Table 7.

Crosstabulation of level of agreement with Question 2.2

2.2) The current system under which you are evaluated has been professionally beneficial.	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly Disagree	3 – 100%	7 – 100%	10 – 100%
Total	3 – 100%	7 – 100%	10 – 100%

Table 8.

Crosstabulation of level of agreement with Question 2-3

2.3) The current system under which you are evaluated has been personally beneficial.	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly Disagree	100%	85%	90%
Somewhat Disagree	0%	15%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%

The trend towards disapproval with the current system was evident as the responses were tabulated. When asked if the current system had aided in professional development, one respondent was in strong agreement while the remaining 90% disagreed. Similar, though stronger responses were provided when asked if the present system had resulted in meaningful feedback about their teaching, as is presented in Table 9. The one comment provided was as follows: “What feedback?!! I have been evaluated twice during my career and never had the opportunity to debrief either time. Once I was told that everything was just fine and the other time I never heard from the administrator again about the so-called results.”

Table 9.

Frequencies of Responses for Question 2-8

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	90.0	90.0	90.0
Somewhat Disagree	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

There was 100% agreement that the present system is not tailored for Adult Educators, but rather for the regular K to 12 system. The comment that it (the present evaluation system) “really doesn't suit anything but administrative paper pushing” further illustrates the lack of respect that is prevalent with regards to the existing system. Combined with the following comment, there can be no doubt as to the lack of respect both with the system and the people carrying out the evaluations: “Really, the entire process is a sham - some of these so-called master teachers were horrible in the classroom themselves. How are we supposed to believe that they have suddenly become educational leaders overnight after getting a new job title?” One last comment was: “The wrong thing done by the wrong people for the wrong purposes.”

There was 100% agreement that that the current system is not applicable for teachers using web-based instruction. Comments were once again supportive of the numbers. One such remark was: “What is on the books now has nothing to do with online learning. The AO can barely send an e-mail attachment, how is he going to seriously evaluate anyone regarding online teaching?”

There was strong disagreement with the statement in question 2-14, “The current system under which you are evaluated includes a formative approach.” One remark that was provided stated: “A nice thought!” Another remark was: “Lip service is given to both approaches, but in reality all that is looked at is classroom management and completion of paperwork. Nothing that deals with teaching over the Internet.”

Overall satisfaction with the current evaluation system used by Rocky Mountain School District was low. Table 10 presents the responses to the statement, “You are satisfied with the current evaluation system used by Rocky Mountain School District #6.”

Table 10.
Frequencies of Responses for Question 2-16

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	80.0	80.0	80.0
Somewhat Disagree	2	20.0	20.0	20.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Thoughts on Formative Evaluation

Participants were initially provided with definitions of Formative and Summative evaluations. Participants were then asked to respond to 7 questions intended to elicit their thoughts on the suitability of formative evaluation for Adult Educators using web-based instruction.

All respondents indicated that they were amenable to an evaluation process that was developed specifically for Rocky Mountain School District Adult Educators using web-based instruction. They all also agreed to utilize a formative evaluation model, which had been designed for web-based instruction. Table 11 presents the results of the following statement: “I would use a formative evaluation model, designed for web-based instruction, on a regular basis.” A comment from someone expressing strong agreement indicated that the strong agreement was “as long as it [the evaluation] was used purely for professional development.” The one respondent who was not in strong agreement, commented, “ProD is a personal activity, springing from a perceived need of the teacher and addressed by the teacher.”

Table 11.

Frequencies of Responses for Question 3-5

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	9	90.0	90.0	90.0
Somewhat Agree	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	100.0

When asked if they would be amenable to an evaluation process that was available for their own implementation, on their own schedule, concerns with administrator capability and involvement was expressed. One comment was; “One caveat . . . that there be someone qualified to oversee the evaluation process - that also had some power to implement change.” A second comment provided more administrator concern: “Provided that it is not driven by the A.O. and is not used for disciplinary actions.”

The one area where there was lack of unanimity was whether both summative and formative evaluations should be offered to Adult Educators using web-based instruction. Table 12 presents the results of the following statement: “I believe that both summative and formative evaluations should be offered to Adult Educators using Web-Based instruction.” The fear of the two being entangled and then being used only for summative purposes surfaced in the following response: “Provided that it is not driven by the A.O. and is not used for disciplinary actions. I have seen examples of administrators using informal observations as the basis for punitive actions against teachers. If the two are not separated, I will want nothing to do with it.”

Table 12.

Frequencies of Responses for Question 3-2 - I believe that both summative and formative evaluations should be offered to Adult Educators using Web-Based instruction.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
Somewhat Disagree	4	40.0	40.0	40.0
Somewhat Agree	5	50.0	50.0	50.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The comments provided by the respondents showed generally concurrence amongst the participants. They were often strong and obviously opinionated, leaving little doubt about the message being conveyed. The lack of respect for the current summative process and for the administrators who perform the process was strongly evident. As much as the data from each question was powerfully against the current process, so to were the comments. The comments were very favourable towards utilizing a formative evaluation model, especially if it were to have a professional development focus.

Summary

One focus of this study was to determine the experiences and attitudes of teachers with regards to the present system of evaluation. Secondly, it was to determine the attitudes and

thoughts of participants towards using a formative evaluation model. This chapter has presented the results, which indicate displeasure with the current summative system and support for the use of a formative model of evaluation. It is further indicated that any summative evaluation should be separate from a formative evaluation. The findings of this survey combined with the literature review provide the basis for a formative evaluation model for Adult Educators using web-based instruction. Indications are that a formative evaluation model would be well received and utilized by the teachers.

CHAPTER V

A FORMATIVE EVALUATION MODEL

Adult Educators using web-based instruction are displeased with the evaluation system that currently exists. As professionals, they would welcome an evaluation process that was developed for their unique situation. A formative evaluation model that was welcomed by the Adult Educators may change the sensitivity to teacher evaluation that currently exists. To ascertain the need for such a model, a survey of Adult Educators' experiences and feelings towards evaluation was conducted. Results of survey have been presented in Chapter IV.

A survey of Adult Educators was conducted, with 10 of 11 potential participants responding. The survey found that 100 % of the respondents would use a formative evaluation model if it were developed specifically for their situation. There was unanimity in expressing dissatisfaction with the current evaluation system used by Rocky Mountain School District. The findings suggest a call for a formative evaluation model for the surveyed Adult Educators. The proposed model is described below and is graphically represented in Figure 1.

Formative Evaluation Model

By combining multiple observers, methods, and materials, this model hopes to overcome the weakness and the problems that come from the current single method of evaluation. Seldin (1993) suggests that there should be multiple sources of information on the same examination and this process is known as triangulation of data. The current system of teacher evaluation

incorporates the observations of one administrator, without input from any other source. This model will incorporate inputs from a web-based portfolio, peer review, student surveys and reflective contribution from the teacher.

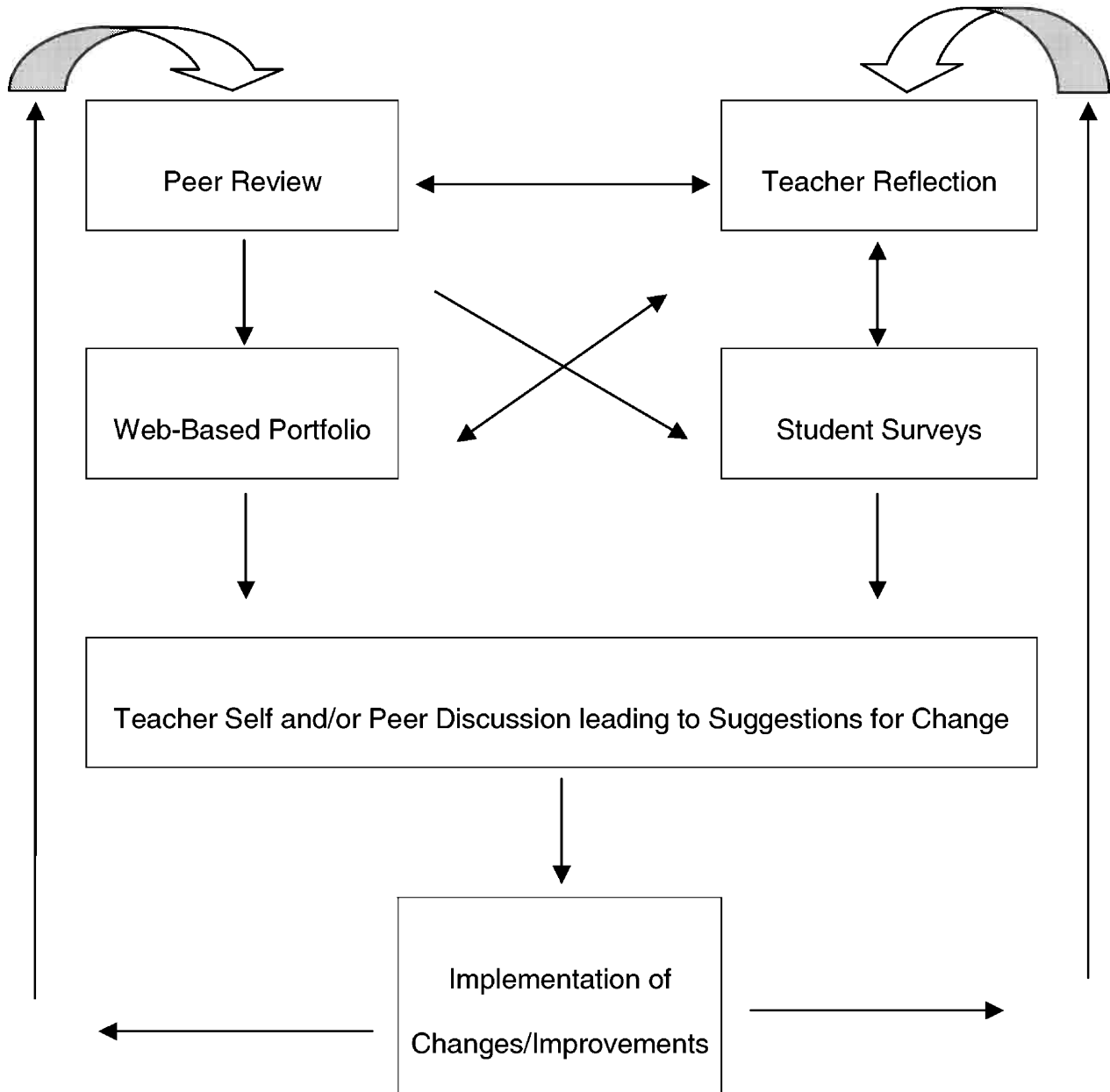


Figure 1. A Formative Evaluation Model for Adult Educators using Web-Based Instruction in Rocky Mountain School District #6

Figure 1 is intended to provide a visual representation of the proposed formative evaluation model. The figure indicates that the process is continual with multiple inputs; web-based portfolio, peer review, student surveys and reflective contribution. It is a looped model that can continuously accept input and process feedback. The remaining processes can be carried out between peer reviews by the teacher on their own.

Web-Based Portfolio

A teaching portfolio is a collection of documents that represent the best of one's teaching and provides the teacher with the occasion to reflect on their teaching (Murray, 1994). The teaching portfolio "can promote growth by providing a textured picture of teaching and learning as they unfold over time, enabling teachers to examine, discuss, and reflect on their performance" (Wolf, Whinery, & Hagerty, 1995, p. 32).

Portfolios may be a route to more intellectually credible, authentic evidence for the evaluation of teaching (and this is their original appeal for many faculty), but along the way, the process of their development gets faculty reflecting on their work in powerful new ways--especially when they work in partnership with colleagues who are also developing portfolios (Hutchings, 1996).

Traditionally teacher portfolios have often taken the structure of binders and folders filled with paperwork that represents the hard work of a teacher during their career. A web-based portfolio makes available to students, peers, and employer a teacher's complete portfolio while demonstrating capability and proficiency with the medium being utilized for teaching.

A web-based portfolio allows for the inclusion of materials and evidence from a variety of sources, such as (but certainly not limited to) completed projects, course outlines and

materials, samples of student work, teacher self-reflections, student letters of support, and other supporting documents all in a hypertext format. The exact contents of a teaching portfolio can vary. Seldin (1993) suggests that the content of a teacher's portfolio should come from four areas: material from oneself, material from others, products of teaching, and items that can sometimes appear in a portfolio. Below is a non-exhaustive list of items that could be included within Seldin's four areas of content for a constantly developing web-based portfolio:

Material from Oneself

- A Curriculum Vitae.
- A statement of the teacher's teaching philosophy.
- Teacher's reflections on their career.
- A listing of current and previous teaching duties, including curriculum with course outlines.
- A description of how each course being taught (or that has been taught) has been modified based upon student feedback and or teacher development/growth.
- A listing of professional development workshops/courses completed combined with an indication of how these activities have contributed to the teacher's professional development.
- A statement describing professional goals for both the short and long term.

Material from Others

- Course evaluations or the data from the evaluations.
- Statements from peers who would have either team taught and or reviewed the teaching portfolio/ student surveys.

- Statements of support from students.

Products of Teaching

- Records of students results such as provincial exam marks.
- Indications of student success in post-secondary education.

Items that can Occasionally Appear

- Curriculum development or modification examples.
- Membership with professional associations.
- Administrative commendations.
- Audio or Video clips of student testimonials.
- Screen captures of on-line course web pages.
- Examples of curriculum modifications for students with special needs.

Using the above as a template for construction of a web-based portfolio, teachers can produce the final product using the software package of their choice.

Student Surveys

“The literature on student ratings is voluminous. One summary in September 1995 found more than 1500 articles and books on the subject” (Bain, 1996). “To achieve pedagogical improvements in interactive Web environments for assisting teaching and promoting learning, faculty can empower themselves by using technologies to facilitate a proven educational process

of receiving and acting on feedback from learners” (Hazari and Schno, 1999). The use of student surveys will be an integral part of the proposed evaluation model.

Utilizing an online form that sends the anonymous information to the teacher, the evaluation model encourages the use of the following questions. Bain (1996) suggests that research has shown the following questions to provide the most reliable outcomes while using a six-point scale (1=lowest; 6=highest):

1. Provide an overall rating of the instructor.
2. Give an overall rating of the course.
3. Estimate how much you learned in the course.
4. Rate the effectiveness of the instructor in stimulating your interest in the subject.
5. Rate the effectiveness of this course in challenging you intellectually.

Additionally, the teacher would be able to include open-ended questions (Bain, 1996) such as (though not limited to):

1. What are the primary teaching strengths of the teacher?
2. What are the primary weaknesses of the teaching? Can you offer suggestions for improvement?
3. Did the course help you learn? Why or why not? If so, what did it help you learn.
4. The information that you provide will be used by the teacher to improve his/her teaching. Please mention any other aspect of the course or teacher not covered in previous questions, which you believe to be especially good or poor, while offering ideas that you believe the teacher could use to improve the course in general or the teaching of the course.

The above questionnaire would be provided for student use for each of the courses being taught by the teacher, each semester.

Peer Review

“Teaching is a profession that can no longer be practiced in isolation” (Holm & Horn, 2003, p.376). “Student evaluations of teaching, though essential, are not enough; there are substantive aspects of teaching that only faculty can judge and assist each other with” (Hutchings, 1996). Information obtained from a peer review process can be used to enhance the information obtained from student surveys. Smith and Scott (1990) indicate that "evaluation strategies that rely on standardized checklists and other bureaucratic methods continue to be widely used even though they contribute little to teacher growth." Peer review on the other hand allows colleagues to review each other's work in a formative manner with the goal of helping to improve. “Informed peers are ideally suited to assess colleagues' course materials and evaluation of students' academic work” (Keig and Waggoner, 1995).

The model being presented will use peer review to aide in the formative evaluation process on an annual basis. Peers will be teachers who are presently using web-based instruction and are knowledgeable and conversant with the curriculum. This evaluation model will suggest that the following areas be examined during peer review:

- Student Surveys: Looking for areas and or comments that indicate either a pattern of concern or area of unease that would require further conversation with the teacher. Examples of such would be viewing numerous similar “complaints” or suggestions from students pertaining either to one course or occurring across several courses.
- Web-Based Portfolio: Examining the portfolio for evidence of completeness and progress or development. Examples would be looking for evidence of curricular

change based upon significant suggestions from students regarding a particular assignment.

- **Teacher Reflection:** Examine and incorporate into the process the reflection of practice generated by the teacher. Examples of which would be to assimilate the teacher's own thoughts and suggestions for steps that can be taken to improve upon or modify a particular process.

Reflection

Holm and Horn (2003) point to reflective practice as being a necessity that should be within the professional repertoire of each and every teacher. "Master teachers continually seek ways to improve their practice" (Holm & Horn, 2003, p.379). Daugherty et al. (as cited in Cole, 2000, p.206) say that it is most important for faculty engaged in Web-based instruction to "... participate in reflective critiquing of their experiences."

There are many techniques for improving teaching practice with reflection.

Reflective thinking is now a general goal of education and the topic of considerable research and debate. Interest in reflection can be traced back to Dewey (1933), who sparked the transition in our schools from memorization to leaning how to think (Cranton, 1998, p. 190).

Schon (1996) introduced the notion of reflective practice as being an important part of the development of someone's abilities within a particular branch of learning. As part of an ongoing, reflective process intended to constantly be in quest of ways and means of gaining

improvement, teacher reflection will play an integral part of the formative evaluation model being presented.

Excellent teachers would, by this measure, be those who set out to inquire into their own practice, identifying key issues they want to pursue, posing questions for themselves, exploring alternatives and taking risks, and doing all of this in the company of peers who can offer critique and support (Hutchins, 1996).

It is through reflection that a teacher can gain a better understanding of their own style and ultimately improve upon effectiveness and professional development (Ferraro, 2000). Reflection that includes the opportunity to share with and question peers is an important facet of this formative evaluation model. Such reflective collaboration is meant to guide participants to become more reflective and successful professionals. “It is not a matter of choosing the right method or stance, but rather a matter of ceaseless, critical self-reflection” (Cranton, 1998, p. 198).

The teacher reflection portion of this evaluation model subscribes to the construct that learning is a lifelong concept. “When teachers engage in reflective practice on a regular basis, their pedagogical judgement is strengthened, and student achievement improves” (Holm & Horn, 2003, p.379). Further, that as adult learners themselves, teachers are participants in self-directed learning. Self-directed learners are learners who are self-managers and monitors of their own learning process. “Many self-directed learners are attempting to gain new skills, knowledge, and attitudes to improve their work performance” (Lowry, 1989).

The teacher reflection portions of the evaluation model being presented will provide a list of areas/questions for the teacher to include in a reflective journal. (This portion of the

evaluation model is meant to be a continuous portion, carried out by the teacher on an on-going basis.) Non-exhaustive lists of those areas/questions are:

- Which areas of your present teaching assignment provide you with the most satisfaction? Why? What steps have you taken to improve in this area? If none, then why?
- Which areas of your present teaching assignment provide you with the least satisfaction? Why? What steps have you taken to improve in this area? If none, then why?
- In what areas have you sought advice or assistance?
- Is there one particular area of your teaching assignment that you would like to spend time developing? How do you plan to achieve this?
- What would you most like to change about your teaching? How can you achieve this?
- While using an on-line medium, how do you help to develop critical thinking skills with students?
- How do you deal with students who are experiencing technological problems during a course?
- Over all, how would you rate your teaching performance since your last formative evaluation?
- What/which area(s) of your present teaching assignment is/are in your opinion the most successful? Why?
- Indicate how the content of your courses are accurate, up-to-date, and are appropriate for both course objectives and ministry learning outcomes.
- Online courses need to have objectives, units, assignments, and time expectations well defined for students. Explain and provide examples of how you accomplish this.

- While using web-based instruction, you use technology to support collaboration, problem solving, presentations, instruction, assessment, and extension of learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom. Explain and provide examples of how you are able to do this.

Hypothetical Implementations

An inexperienced teacher would have little to start with regards to their portfolio. A more seasoned teacher on the other hand would be required to expand upon past practice and be open to innovative ways of teaching online.

A first year teacher would experience peer review, though not as stringently as a seasoned teacher. The first year teacher's portfolio might consist of completed lessons whereas the seasoned teacher's portfolio might consist of examples of best practice and implementation.

Teacher reflection for a first year teacher might consist of reflection of completed courses and were they successful, could the same manner of instruction be used again? The seasoned teacher would be expected to provide more analysis of best teacher practice, evaluation of procedures and a willingness to change, modify, redirect or eliminate certain aspects of their teaching.

Student survey results for the first year teacher might need to be tempered in order to provide positive feedback. The seasoned teacher should be able to critically evaluate student comments and incorporate those, which honestly reflect the need for change.

The teacher self and/or peer discussion portion of the model, for first year teachers, would imply a mentorship component rather than it being used as an evaluation tool in the strictest sense. The seasoned teacher would also use this portion as a mentoring opportunity but also as a means of analysing his or her own personal educational philosophy with respect to change and professional growth.

Conclusion

The formative evaluation model, which has been presented, is a looped model that can continuously accept input and process feedback. The process can be carried out between peer reviews by the teacher on their own. The continuous nature of the model reflects the incessant nature of learning experienced by self-directed adult learners. It is argued that the formative evaluation model, as depicted in Figure 1 and explained in this chapter, would meet the needs of the educators that have been surveyed. The practicability of such a model is supported by the literature review and survey results.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An integral, albeit somewhat suspiciously viewed aspect of education is the process of teacher evaluation. This is true both for Distance Education online and traditional modes of instruction. The main purpose of formative teacher evaluation is to improve instruction. It provides teachers with valuable information upon which instructional modification and professional development can be made. The key to a successful formative evaluation process is that it be allowed to be an individual, self-directed process that is accommodating and compliant of individual objectives.

Rather than have an evaluation process that people feel “happens” to them, this study has presented a model in which teachers can play an active part. This study developed a formative evaluation model for Adult Educators using web-based instruction for Distance Education at the high school level. The target population was surveyed in order to ascertain both present experiences and future desires pertaining to formative evaluation.

To direct this study, the following research questions were established:

- Would the Adult Educators of Rocky Mountain School District #6, lacking a prescribed model to guide them in formative evaluation of their instruction, welcome a formative evaluation model that they could employ?
- Is the present evaluation system working?
- Is there an existing formative evaluation model for online teachers?

To offer answers to these questions, Adult Educators in Rocky Mountain School District were surveyed and a literature review conducted. Results of the survey were presented in Chapter IV.

Question 1

Would the Adult Educators of Rocky Mountain School District #6, lacking a prescribed model to guide them in formative evaluation of their instruction, welcome a formative evaluation model that they could employ?

The survey revealed that 90% of the respondents were in strong agreement with their using a formative evaluation model, designed specifically for their use with web-based instruction. There was unanimous support for an evaluation process that provided a means of improving their web-based instruction.

Question 2

Is the present evaluation system working?

There was strong dissatisfaction with the current evaluation system. A 90% majority felt that the current system had neither personally nor professionally benefited them. All participants felt that the current system did not take into account their web-based instructional duties.

Question 3

Is there an existing formative evaluation model for online teachers?

No measurement yet exists that would adequately evaluate how well a faculty member performs in a virtual classroom. (Hazari and Schno, 1999) The survey indicated that there was no such process in place for the survey participants.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study was delimited to Adult Educators using web-based instruction in Rocky Mountain School District #6. The results may not be representative of Adult Educators in other British Columbia school districts who are also using web-based instruction nor of other educators using web-based instruction at the high school level. Further study is necessary to determine the thoughts and feelings of these excluded educators throughout British Columbia.

The most prominent finding of this study is that the respondents identified the current evaluation system under which they are evaluated as being unsuitable. Following an implementation period for the new evaluation model, it would be significant to re-investigate the target population in order to establish if the new example has provided an acceptable formative evaluation model.

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APPENDIX A



MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 4, 2002
TO: Ed Main
COPY: Dr. Lynda Ross, Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board
FROM: Janice Green, Secretary, Research Ethics Board
SUBJECT: Ethics Proposal #02-23 "Formative Evaluation for the Online Teacher"

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board reviewed the above-noted proposal and supporting documentation, and I am pleased to advise that it has been awarded **FULL APPROVAL** on ethical grounds.

The approval for the study "as presented" is valid for a period of one year. If required, an extension must be sought in writing prior to the expiry of the existing approval. A Final Report is to be submitted when this research project is completed.

As you progress with implementation of the proposal, if you need to make any changes or modifications please forward this information to the Research Ethics Board Chair via Janice Green, the REB Secretary.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact janiceg@athabascau.ca.

APPENDIX B

Letter to Adult Educators with Rocky Mountain School District #6

Dear xxx,

I am writing to request your participation in a research study on the development of a model for formative evaluation that can be used by teachers using web-based instruction. Please read the following information regarding the research study entitled **Formative Evaluation for the Online Teacher**, so that you can make an informed decision regarding your participation.

The purpose of this research is to develop a formative evaluation model for Adult Educators who use web-based instruction Distance Education at the High School level. As part of the study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. It will take you approximately 15 to 20 minutes to do this.

You should be aware that participation in this study is in no way attached to the evaluation of your use of web-based instruction for Rocky Mountain School District #6 or your participation in the use of web-based instruction. Even if you give your permission you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty.

Participation in this study will involve no greater risks than those ordinarily experienced in daily life. Data will be gathered in such a way as to ensure confidentiality. Your name or any identifying information will not be released to Rocky Mountain School District, any agent of the School District or anyone else during or after the study. Names will be replaced with number codes. All names will be removed from the questionnaires at the end of data collection by October 21st 2002. Once collected, responses will be kept in strictest confidence in a locked file cabinet at the residence of the investigator, to which only I will have access. All information will be held confidential, except when legislation or a professional code of conduct requires that it be reported. Only group results will be reported in any published studies. The raw data will be kept in a locked file cabinet and destroyed by shredding one year after completion of the study.

The results of the study will be made available to interested participants in the form of a bound presentation. The data will also be submitted for publication and interested participants may request information on the journal and publication date from the investigator.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher (Ed Main) at tel: 489.2880, or via e-mail, miriamed@cyberlink.bc.ca, or the researcher's supervisor Dr. Mohamed Ally, at tel: (780) 675-6406 or (800) 788-9041 ext. 6406, or via e-mail, mohameda@athabascau.ca.

Two copies of the consent form are provided. **Please return one signed copy to Ed Main at PO Box 343, Cranbrook B.C. V1C 4H8 or return the form with your email acting as your signature to miriamed@cyberlink.bc.ca.** Be sure to keep a copy of the consent form for your records.

Thank you for considering participation in this research study.

Sincerely,

Ed Main
PO Box 343,
Cranbrook, British Columbia
Canada, V1C 4H8
Telephone 250.489.2880

APPENDIX C

Consent form from Adult Educators

Consent for Research Participation

I, the undersigned, hereby give my consent to participate in a research project titled **Formative Evaluation for the Online Teacher**.

I understand that such consent means that I will take part by October 21st 2002. I also understand that the time required for completion is approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

I understand that participation in this research study is completely voluntary and is not a condition of employment with Rocky Mountain School District #6. I understand that participation in this study may be terminated at any time by my request or at the request of the investigator. Participation in this project and/or withdrawal from this project will not adversely affect me in any way.

I understand that this study will not involve any greater risks than those ordinarily occurring in daily life.

I understand that all information will be held confidential, except when legislation or a professional code of conduct requires that it be reported.

I understand that only group data will be reported in any published reports. I understand that I will be able to request the results of the study, as well as information on resulting publications from the investigator.

I AM INDICATING MY CONSENT BY RETURNING A SIGNED COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO ED MAIN.

I have retained a copy of this consent form for my records. I understand that if I have any questions I can contact the researcher (Ed Main) at tel: 489.2880, or via e-mail, miriamed@cyberlink.bc.ca, or the researcher's supervisor Dr. Mohamed Ally, at tel: (780) 675-6406 or (800) 788-9041 ext. 6406, or via e-mail, mohameda@athabascau.ca.

Date

Signature

Participant's Printed Name

APPENDIX D

Teacher Formative Evaluation Questionnaire

For each statement, select the response that best represents your agreement or disagreement. If any of the instructions are unclear, please don't hesitate to email me at miriamed@cyberlink.bc.ca for clarification.

1. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Age _____ Gender _____

Highest level of education completed:

Undergraduate Bachelor degree Masters degree Doctorate

Undergraduate degree major (Please specify) _____

Undergraduate degree minor (If applicable, please specify) _____

2. EXPERIENCES WITH THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF EVALUATION

- 1) You are satisfied with the current evaluation system used by Rocky Mountain School District #6.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

- 2) The current system under which you are evaluated has been professionally beneficial.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

- 3) The current system under which you are evaluated has been personally beneficial.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

4) The current system under which you are evaluated has aided in your professional development.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

5) The current system under which you are evaluated has been carried out on an annual basis.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

6) The current system under which you are evaluated has provided you with opportunity to provide feedback.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

7) The current system under which you are evaluated is carried out by person(s) that you feel comfortable with.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

8) The current system under which you are evaluated has resulted in meaningful feedback about your teaching.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

9) The current system under which you are evaluated meets your needs as an Adult Educator.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

10) The current system under which you are evaluated is tailored for Adult Educators.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

11) The current system under which you are evaluated is tailored for teachers of the regular K to 12 system.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

12) The current system under which you are evaluated takes into account your web-based instructional duties.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

13) The current system under which you are evaluated is applicable for teachers using web-based instruction.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

14) The current system under which you are evaluated includes a formative approach.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

15) The current system under which you are evaluated includes only a summative approach.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

16) You are satisfied with the current evaluation system used by Rocky Mountain School District #6.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

Do you have any further comments that you wish to make about any of the above questions or about this topic?

3. THOUGHTS ON FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Definitions for this section:

- I. **Formative Evaluation:** The focus of formative evaluation is on professional growth. With formative evaluation teachers choose areas of focus for a particular period of time and can use multiple sources of feedback (self, peers, supervisors, parents, and students) and methods (portfolios, action research, journals, videotaping) to document progress toward completion of goals.
- II. **Summative Evaluation:** Summative evaluation is used in order to “. . . describe the overall successes of the program and to determine whether the program should be continued.” (Wilde & Sockey) Summative evaluation allows for unbiased, objective answers and conclusions to be obtained and can

subsequently decide whether the program is achieving the goals that were originally put forth. (Kemp, pg. 227)

- 1) I believe that formative evaluations should be the only evaluation given to Adult Educators using Web-Based instruction.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

- 2) I believe that both summative and formative evaluations should be offered to Adult Educators using Web-Based instruction.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

- 3) I would be amenable to an evaluation process that was available for my own implementation, on my own schedule.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

- 4) I would be amenable to an evaluation process that provides a means of improving my web-based instruction.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

- 5) I would be amenable to an evaluation process that provides a means of improving my professional development.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

6) I would be amenable to an evaluation process that was developed specifically for RMSD #6 Adult educators, using web-based instruction.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

7) I would use a formative evaluation model, designed for web-based instruction, on a regular basis.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Comments: _____

Do you have any further comments that you wish to make about any of the above questions or about this topic?

If you have any difficulties completing this form, please don't hesitate to contact me at miriamed@cyberlink.bc.ca and I will assist you as best I can.

Thank you so much for participating in this research project. I appreciate your contribution.

Ed Main